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13 The Magazine

The road to trouble



2 Time Out

Bewitching Sandra Bullock



24 Sports

Stern warning for NBA

INDEX

Business	10
International	6
News in Focus	13
Opinion	8
Classifieds	18
Sports	24

Meridor kicks off election campaign

By HEIDI J. GLEIT

In a speech emphasizing the importance of responsible and credible government – and the current lack of it – Dan Meridor yesterday officially began his campaign to be the state's next prime minister.

"There's no responsibility. There's no leadership," he told over 200 supporters at Beit Hahayal in Tel Aviv last night.

PM warns Olmert, Page 3

"Israel deserves more than this. We deserve better leaders."

"Everyone knows that we, the nation, the Likud, have reached the point of crisis. It's hard to admit, but it's true. It's a crisis of leadership."

"If a man feels a responsibility to the public, he must do something, even if it is painful and difficult," he continued, referring to his decision to leave the Likud in which he was raised and start a new centrist party. "I decided to do this, to offer different leadership."

The peace process is at a critical point, but the current government can't negotiate with the Palestinians, Meridor said, because "they know that what he [Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu] stands up for in the morning will collapse by the evening."

See MERIDOR, Page 6



Former chief of General Staff Amnon Lipkin-Shahak talks to reporters yesterday at the IDF Induction Center near Tel Aviv. (Ilan Oren/Dayveer / Israel Sun)

Shahak trying to enlist Mordechai

Former CGS hangs up uniform, hints at plans for centrist party

By ELLI WOHLGELER, MICHAEL YUDELMAN, and LIAT COLLINS

Former chief of General Staff Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, who was discharged from the IDF yesterday after 36 years' service, is heavily wooing Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai to join his new centrist party as its No. 2, according to a source involved in the negotiations.

"Shahak wants him very much, and he's pressing and giving it all he has, to make it possible for Mordechai to join him," said the source. "He understands that this is the winning ticket; if he has Mordechai in second place, he has a powerful team, he has a person who can appeal directly to the core of the Likud voters – those who are not Ashkenazi, among whom Mordechai is very popular."

Mordechai is also being courted by Labor Party leader Ehud Barak, but it is highly unlikely that Mordechai will join the party.

"For him to go over to Labor is very difficult. It's crossing the line," said the source. "But for him to go from the Likud to a centrist party is much easier."

Mordechai has indicated in conversations this week that he does not trust Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu anymore, having already been burned by him several times.

The source said that Shahak's confidants have been talking on the

phone daily with Mordechai's people over the past week. Timing is critical for Shahak, because he must move fast to form and register a new party, and announce where Likud defectors Ronni Milo and Dan Meridor stand on the party list. They

Elections '99

would probably be third and fourth, respectively, if Mordechai becomes No. 2.

Barak warns Shahak, Page 2
Love at first sight?, Page 13

Mordechai's only reason for not joining Shahak immediately is because he is waiting to see whether his close friend, Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert, will run for the Likud leadership.

As for Mordechai, staying with Netanyahu, the only chance of that, said the source, is "if he plays his cards wrong and announces his intentions too late, when everything will be closed already. Shahak can't wait too long; he has to start his campaign very quickly; it's only two or three months before elections."

Netanyahu's campaign manager, Justice Minister Tzahi Hanegbi, met last night with Mordechai in an attempt to persuade him not to leave the Likud.

A senior coalition member yesterday proposed that Netanyahu tender his resignation to the Knesset on Monday, thus sabotaging both Shahak's and Olmert's chances of running for prime minister. If Netanyahu resigns, according to the law, the new prime minister may only be elected from among MKs.

But a source close to Netanyahu said this would be an ugly trick and Netanyahu is not considering it.

Emerging from the IDF Induction Center at Tel Hashomer, Shahak announced he is embarking on a new way which would give people hope and unite the different parts of the nation.

He spoke of the "tremendous sense of responsibility which brings me today to a difficult decision, together with the feeling of people who expect and want something different in this country. The division among us is bad for everyone... I believe in a new way, a way which joins many sectors of society together as possible and gives hope to all those who feel they need it, as I do. We must join hands, give up everything to do with ego as much as possible... I will contribute everything I can to this."

See SHAHAK, Page 6

J'lem Syndrome to surge in 2000

By JUDY SEGEL

The number of religious pilgrims who think they are the messiah, Moses, David, Elijah, or Jesus is likely to swell, as people suffering from the "Jerusalem Syndrome" are encouraged by a large audience of normal Christian visitors expected to arrive here in 2000 and 2001.

Prof. Richard Landes, an expert in medieval history at Boston University and director of its Center for Millennial Studies, predicted yesterday that local psychiatric facilities will need to prepare themselves for coping with the phenomenon

when the reputed 2,000th anniversary of Jesus's birth rolls around.

Landes, an Orthodox Jew who has studied the last 1,000 years of relations between Jews and Christians, said that in 1033, the 1,000th anniversary of Jesus's

crucifixion, hordes of people came to Jerusalem to mark the event – and many refused to leave. This, he suggested, could repeat itself now, at least to some extent.

See SYNDROME, Page 6

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Elections '99

NEWS

in brief

PA: Arafat offended by Sharon's manners

A spokesman for Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon said yesterday that Palestinian officials, who refused to meet with him because he would not shake their hands, were "only hurting themselves." He was reacting to media reports that Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat refused to meet with Sharon because he did not shake the chairman's hand at the US-Israeli-Palestinian summit at Erez checkpoint 12 days ago.

"If representatives of the [Palestinian] Authority boycott joint meetings, they are basically halting the process," the spokesman said.

Danna Harman

Mofaz receives results of inquiry

The conclusions of an IDF inquiry into the deaths of Sgt. Nahum Elah, Sgt. Raz Promovitch, and Sgt. Yosef Ben-Moha, and the wounding of four other Golani Brigade soldiers in the security zone on November 16 were accepted by Chief of General Staff Lt.-Gen. Shaul Mofaz yesterday. The operational and intelligence recommendations mentioned in the inquiry, headed by Brig.-Gen. Yisrael Ziv, were listed as highly classified.

Margot Dudkevitch

Weizman invites PM for meeting

President Ezer Weizman yesterday invited Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for a meeting on Monday to discuss implementation of the Wye agreement with the Palestinians, Israel Radio reported last night. It said the prime minister had accepted the president's invitation. Weizman is said to be concerned that Netanyahu has put the accord on hold ahead of upcoming elections.

Jerusalem Post Staff

Pnina Rosenblum running for Knesset

PNINA Rosenblum yesterday registered her party, Pnina Rosenblum, with the party registrar.

"I've registered, mama," she told her mother in a telephone conversation played on Israel Radio.

The former model who has become a role model to many women would only say about her party that her number 2 would not be a general.

Rosenblum, whose political plans were first treated as a joke, said yesterday she would have the last "laugh all the way to the Knesset."

• MK EITAN Cabel (Labor) has asked that election broadcasts be banned on pirate stations. "Pirate stations, and first and foremost Arutz 7 are a convenient and cheap tool for unrestrained extremist political propaganda without acceptable supervision," he said. Cabel suggested that parties which violate such an order be punished by having money allocated under the Party Funding Law deducted from their budget. "Public money should not be spent on pirate stations," he said. MK

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ELECTIONS NOTEBOOK

BY MICHAEL YUDELMAN
LIAT COLLINS
and DAVID RUDGE

to establish a new party with a distinctly regional flavor, named the *Galilee Party*.

"I have spoken with several other people, including council heads and business people, and there has been a positive response," said Bubbut.

Bubbut stressed that he would not be seeking election and was "more than satisfied" to continuing being mayor of Ma'alot-Tarshiha.

"The time has come for Galilee, where there are 500,000 eligible Jewish and Arab voters, to have its own party which would be concerned with the region - not Judea and Samaria, but solely with helping to promote and develop the Galilee," said Bubbut.

There are 500,000 eligible Jewish and Arab voters, to have its own party which would be concerned with the region - not Judea and Samaria, but solely with helping to promote and develop the Galilee," said Bubbut.

By MICHAEL YUDELMAN

Labor leader Ehud Barak yesterday warned former chief of staff Amnon Lipkin-Shahak not to make use of Yitzhak Rabin's name in his campaign for prime minister.

A number of Labor leaders, including MKs Binyamin Ben-Eliezer and Efraim Sneh, yesterday reiterated Barak's recent call on Lipkin-Shahak to join Labor to defeat Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Asked why he did not accept Barak's call, Lipkin-Shahak gave at least four reasons yesterday.

He did not want to be identified with a party considered left wing. Barak was less popular among important segments of society than Shimon Peres, the left alone could not win the elections and Labor on its own cannot achieve peace due to the leftist image which has stuck to it. However, a new centrist party including within it right-wing elements, will succeed, he said.

Lipkin-Shahak was also quoted in *Ha'aretz* as saying "the goal is to topple Netanyahu from power, and the most efficient way of achieving this is with a center party, which will consist of representatives from broad sectors of the public." Lipkin-Shahak said Labor and Meretz don't enable new forces to penetrate their ranks.

Concerning the leadership of the new party, he said if polls indicate MK Dan Meridor is more popular than he is, he would agree to step down and become Meridor's number 2.

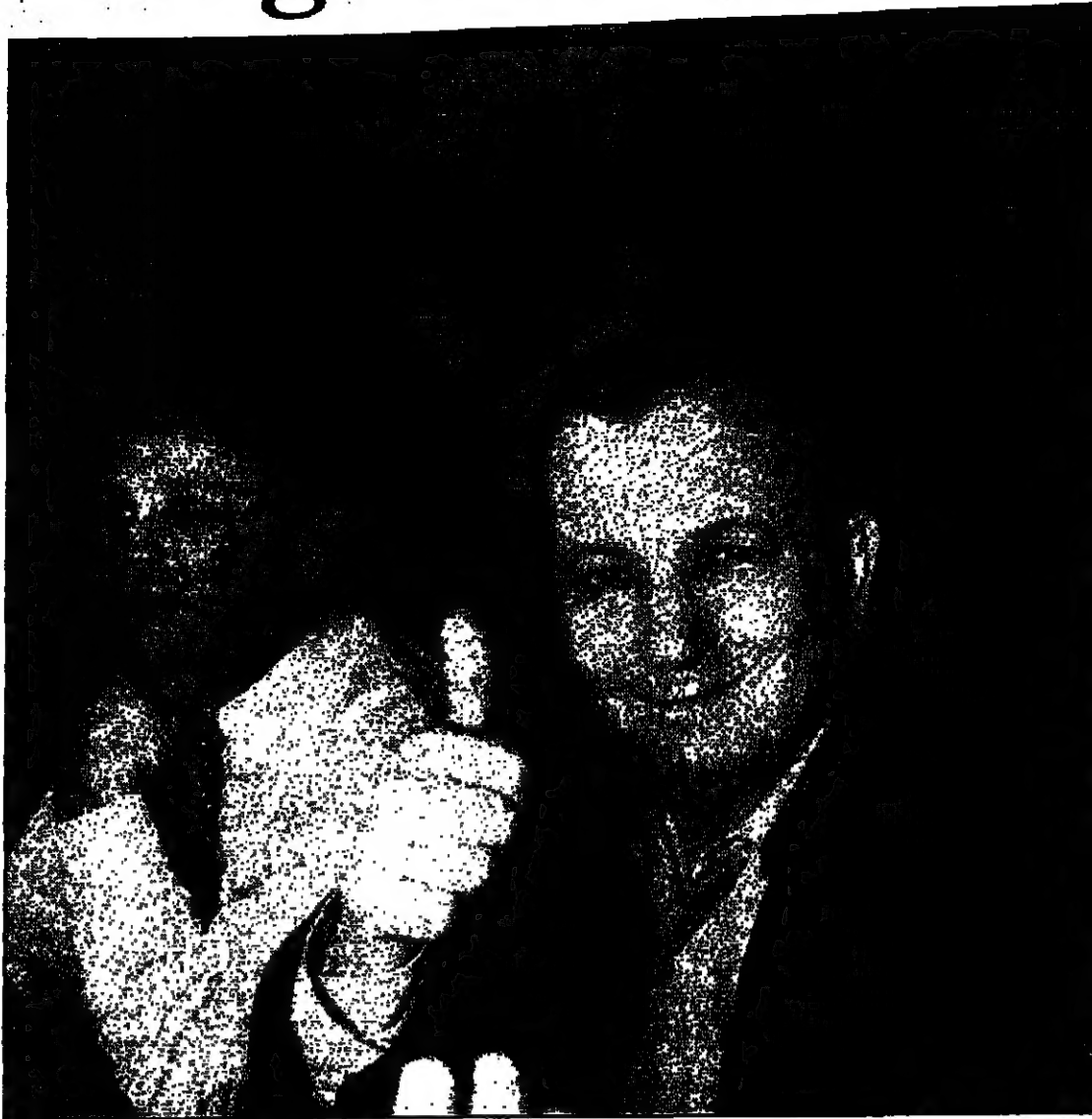
At the meeting of Labor's leadership yesterday, Barak did not refer to Lipkin-Shahak's comments

about Labor, but said, "I cannot refrain from mentioning one man who is no longer with us, Yitzhak Rabin, who never confused, even during the most difficult times, in uniform and for years after joining Labor, the leader for the movement which he led. Whoever doesn't understand this connection must not use Rabin's name," Barak said.

MK Yossi Beilin said Lipkin-Shahak was hesitant to expose his left-wing views and is trying to dissociate himself from Labor's positions. MK Eli Goldschmidt blasted Lipkin-Shahak for teaming up with MK Dan Meridor, who opposed the Oslo peace process.

Among those whose support will seriously be canvassed by a new center party are Oslo-supporting religious Israelis who have voted Labor or even Meretz, for want of a suitable alternative.

Aryeh Dean Cohen adds:
The spokesman for the Meimad Party, which sought but failed to attract most of the liberal religious population, said yesterday the party welcomed Shahak's entry into the political arena with anticipation. Meimad has held meetings with leaders of the proposed center party, and secretariat chairman Rabbi Michael Melchior expressed the hope that Shahak "will be able to exploit the great popularity he has gained to advance Israel's image as a more Jewish and more democratic state." Melchior added that Shahak would be evaluated on his ability to find solutions to "the growing tribal behavior in the people and the threat of the deep split in relations between religious and secular Israelis."



Ehud Barak at the Labor Party leadership meeting yesterday.

(Dan Osofsky/Jerusalem Post)

Porat seeks June 1 as election day

By LIAT COLLINS

Knesset Law Committee Chairman Hanan Porat (National Religious Party) yesterday proposed June 1, 1999 as the date for the national elections. Porat's committee is responsible for furthering the passage of the bill calling for the dissolution of the Knesset and early elections. The committee is scheduled to hold a meeting on Monday to prepare the bill for a second and third reading.

He suggested the June 1 date in a letter he sent yesterday to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Labor Party leader Ehud Barak, Likud whip Meir Sheerit, and Labor whip Elie Goldschmidt calling on the parties to reach an agreement on a date before Monday's committee meeting.

Sheerit told *The Jerusalem Post* the June 1 date is also the one favored by Netanyahu, although Sheerit personally prefers a March polling day. Labor still seems to be pushing for an earlier date than June.

Labor's Haim Ramon, who initiated the early elections bill along with Meretz whip Haim Oron, favors April 27. At a Labor meeting yesterday, Barak said the party wants elections between the end of April and the third week of May.

Sheerit said that neither the coalition nor the opposition had yet agreed on a date among their own members. Meretz leader Yossi Sarid wants elections in March.

In the letter Porat mentioned the opinion of the Central Elections Committee, claiming that it would be very difficult to prepare for elections unless given at least 90 days after the date is announced.

He noted the date needs to take into account the Pessah vacation; the Holocaust Memorial Day; Remembrance Day; the Yom Ha'atzmaut; and Yom Ha'Shema. Elections are traditionally held on Tuesdays.

Porat also said, "We have to pay attention to the sensitive May 4 date on which the Palestinian Authority intends declaring a state - when it is not appropriate to be in the middle of elections and perhaps even between the first and second round of elections for prime minister."

"I would add that these elections are particularly fateful for the future of Israel, its security and borders. It is appropriate that we allow all parties - old and new - to ready themselves," Porat said.

He said the June 1 date would allow the Knesset to continue to function properly up to the Pessah recess which starts March 17, without requiring its dissolution in mid-session.

Netanyahu reportedly would like the early June date, as it gives the government more time to take steps to improve its image, while allowing time for Amnon Lipkin-Shahak's popularity to wane once his political campaign gets under way.

Amnon Lipkin-Shahak at a glance

1944 - born in Tel Aviv
1959 - enrolled in Haifa's military academy
1962 - drafted and joined the Paratroop Brigade
1967 - during the Six Day War served as a company commander
1968 - decorated for courage for his participation in the Karama Operation, liquidating terrorists inside Jordan.
1973 - during the Yom Kippur War served as a reconnaissance unit commander, participating in numerous secret raids in Beirut.
1974 - decorated for courage for his participation in the Aviv Neurim raid on PLO headquarters in Beirut.
1975 - battalion commander, deputy

commander of the 35th Paratroops, brigade commander, commander of an armored division.
1983 - appointed OC Central Command
1986 - appointed OC Intelligence
1991 - appointed deputy chief of General Staff and commanded Operation Solomon, the airlift of Ethiopian Jewry
1995 - appointed the 15th IDF chief of General Staff by then defense minister Yitzhak Rabin
Amnon Lipkin-Shahak is married to Tali, whom he met while she was a military correspondent during the Lebanon war. He is the father of five children and holds a BA in history from Tel Aviv University. *Margot Dudkevitch*

The politics of conciliation

ANALYSIS

By NER EYAL

The bumper stickers are not yet printed, the campaign jingles not yet scored, the official platforms not yet written, the election date not yet set.

One of the leading candidates - Amnon Lipkin-Shahak - has not even yet officially declared. But the themes of this campaign are crystal clear.

The weeks up to the election will just be variations on motifs already woven.

No sooner had US image guru James Carville deplaned last week, than Ehud Barak told a press conference that if elected, he will build a government "for all the citizens of Israel, not just for the extremists."

This line has found its way into numerous public statements of Barak has made since then, including his Knesset speech on Monday. He is outlining the theme of his campaign: a completely untrustworthy Binyamin Netanyahu is held hostage by the settlers and the hardliners. It is the politics of them against us, the levelheaded versus the extremists. It is a strain of the divisive politics that characterized the country in the months immediately after the Rabin assassination.

Netanyahu has taken a similar

approach. In the remarks he has made since Monday's Knesset vote, he has spoken of how the Left ganged up on him, how the Left will sell everything out, how the Left is Yasser Arafat's preferred choice. It is the politics of them against us, the levelheaded versus the extremists. It is a strain of divisive politics that characterized the country in the months just prior to the Rabin assassination.

Into this breach is where Shahak stepped yesterday, when he formally kicked off his army boots and officially put on his politician's shoes. He didn't say much at his impromptu press conference, but what he said contrasted starkly with the message the other candidates are sending.

"I believe in a new way, a way that will join as many sectors of society together as possible," he said. "Everything we do together will succeed."

Had either Barak or Netanyahu mouthed these words, no one would

have believed them. How can Barak talk about welding as many sectors of society together as possible when he dismisses many of the religious and the settlers as extremists. And how can Netanyahu talk of doing the same when he rails constantly against the Left, which in his mind even includes the likes of Dan Meridor.

It is likely that many people will dismiss what Shahak said about domestic peace being a prerequisite to peace with the country's neighbors as "an empty platitude, one more suited for a public relations campaign on the sides of Egged buses than for serious political discourse. But it is a platitude that neither Netanyahu or Barak mouth."

Shahak, in his deep, measured tones, yesterday placed himself squarely between Barak and Netanyahu, and spoke words that are likely to carry enormous appeal to a nation that poll after poll shows is more concerned about internal polarization than the Palestinian problem. Shahak has thrown down a challenge to Barak and Netanyahu. If the polls show that his message is effective, then Barak and Netanyahu may be forced to adjust their own rhetoric.

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سكرا من الامم

What happens to Jerusalem if Olmert joins race?

By ELLI WOHLGELER

If Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert runs for prime minister and wins, what happens to his mayoralty?

During his campaign for prime minister, Olmert would remain as mayor. Upon his election, he would, of course, have to step down, and his No. 2 would become temporary mayor until new elections are held. In the last City Council, that position was held by Deputy Mayor Uri Lupolianski. Coalition agreements have not yet been organized for the present council, but should Lupolianski remain No. 2, he would then become, temporarily, the first haredi mayor of Jerusalem.

Once Olmert steps down, new elections for mayor must take place 60 days later, or on the last Tuesday before the 60-day limit is up. This procedure was only made law in March. Under the old system, the City Council would elect a successor among members of the council.

"It makes a great deal of common sense," said Lior Chorev, head of Effective Media, a political consulting firm. "If the people voted in a direct election of a mayor, they have the right to vote again."



Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert (l) chats with MK Dan Meridor yesterday outside the Defense Ministry in Tel Aviv, where they each met with Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai. (Maxi Milstein/Israel Sun)

PM warns Olmert not to contest him

By DANNA HARMAN and MICHAEL YUDELMAN

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu indicated yesterday that he is disappointed by Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert's reported plans to run against him in the upcoming elections. He called them "strange" and warned Olmert it would be a mistake to run against him.

"Up until five weeks ago, I helped Olmert in his campaign [for mayor] and contributed greatly to his success. There wasn't a moment in which he came to me for help in which I didn't respond, and we effected far reaching changes in my efforts to strengthen Jerusalem. Therefore it's [Olmert's behavior] certainly strange. But what's more important is, there is no candidate who can get the overwhelming support of Likud members but me," he said at a farewell party for cabinet secretary Dan Naveh in Jerusalem.

"There is no candidate who will be able to get the support of the majority of Likud members, or the sort of massive public support that I can... and I think this is clear to most people," said Netanyahu.

Netanyahu said he is disappointed with Olmert's activity in

the Likud and his reported plans to run against him for the Likud leadership, saying Olmert would be making a mistake if he does so. Netanyahu said he would win such a showdown and he is the only one who can lead the Likud to victory in the general elections.

Olmert still has not decided whether to contest the Likud leadership and continued meeting with party members and politicians yesterday in an effort to muster broad support.

"This is the worst government in the history of the state," Olmert said in an interview on CNN on Wednesday night. Yesterday, he expressed concern for the situation in the Likud.

"The situation is not simple. The internal crisis, the feeling of losing correct perspective, and the feeling of breakdown is beginning to gain momentum. My best friends in the party, like Dan Meridor and [Ze'ev] Benny Begin are quitting the party. This is extremely worrying. I feel deep sorrow for what is happening in the party," Olmert told Israel Radio.

In response to Netanyahu's criticism, Olmert said, "I helped Netanyahu get elected prime minister and I won't be angry with him if he decides to contend

with me. I don't think whatever he did for my election is relevant right now."

Netanyahu was quoted saying in private conversations that if Olmert wants a fight, he will get one. Netanyahu yesterday appointed Justice Minister Tzahi Hanegbi his campaign chairman.

After meeting with Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai for almost two hours, Olmert said he has not yet decided whether to contest the party's leadership, but has become more convinced of the urgency of rehabilitating the Likud and putting together a large group for this purpose.

Mordechai also met yesterday with Labor MK Shimon Peres and is believed to be in close contact with emerging candidate Amnon Lipkin-Shahak as well. Mordechai's moves will effect Olmert's decision and it is assumed he will not run against Netanyahu without Mordechai's support.

Earlier he met with Begin, who made it clear he is leaving the Likud and intends to run for prime minister at the head of a right-wing party. Begin is still withholding a public announcement due to pressures from within the Likud and from the right wing that running for prime minister would split the Right.

Netanyahu blasts media

By DANNA HARMAN

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu yesterday lashed out at the media, accusing them of partisanship and claiming that most people in the press are "working for the Left in an attempt to topple me."

"This has been going on from my very first day in office. There has not been a moment of grace from my political rivals, and the press that gives them their stage," said Netanyahu at a farewell party for cabinet secretary Dan Naveh, who has decided to run for the Knesset on the Likud list.

"There is an attempt here to sys-

tematically slander me... but it makes no impression on me... and I have no doubt whatsoever that it will not make an impression on the public and that I will win the elections conclusively and convincingly."

No replacement has been named for Naveh, so his deputy, Aaron Lishanski, will temporarily fill in for him on his cabinet duties. Tomer Orani, an senior aide to Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon, will fill Naveh's role on the Palestinian-Israeli steering committee.

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A muted Christmas Eve in Bethlehem

By HAIM SHAPIRO

Christmas Eve festivities in Bethlehem were muted this year, as a result of the dearth of tourists, frightened away by the recent US attacks on Iraq and preparations for 2000, which have left many streets and much of Manger Square, facing the ancient Church of the Nativity, in disarray.

Eyewitnesses reported that Palestinian policemen beat a number of tourists who attempted to enter the church while Suha Arafat, the wife of Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat, was inside.

According to one witness, a senior police official subsequently apologized profusely to the tourists, and invited them to enter the church, but they refused.

The Palestinian Police then received orders to allow all tourists to enter the church.

George Samur, deputy-director of tourism for the PA, said yesterday afternoon that relatively few people came to view the traditional entry of Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah into the city, despite the fine weather. The patriarch was accompanied by Israeli officials and police on horseback from his residence in the Latin Patriarchate in the Old City of Jerusalem to the checkpoint at Rachel's Tomb on the outskirts of Bethlehem, where he was received by Palestinian officials and Palestinian policemen, also on horseback.

As in previous years, the patriarch was preceded into Manger Square by Christian boy scouts, many of them with drums and bagpipes and the banners of their scout groups, as well as Palestinian flags. The Palestinian flags and pictures of Arafat also constituted a large part of the Christmas decorations around the square.

"We hope that many people will come tonight," Samur said, referring to the celebrations in the square.



Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah blesses the crowd as the Christmas procession makes its way into Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity for a mass yesterday.

The local tourism office had organized a concert of choirs for the evening, including groups from the US, Korea, France, Belgium, and Germany, as well as three local groups. At midnight, Sabbah was scheduled to preside at a Pontifical High Mass in St. Catherine's Church, the Roman Catholic parish church adjoining the

Church of the Nativity. For those not lucky enough to obtain the free tickets, distributed by Catholic officials in advance, the mass was shown on a huge television screen in the square.

In Nazareth, the annual Christmas Eve parade took place without incident, despite clashes last week in which supporters of

the Moslem city council list had wrecked shops with Christmas decorations. Moslem and Christian clergy representing a wide range of communities marched at the head of the procession, in which scouts, school groups, choirs, and representatives of many institutions took part. Local observers said they sensed

that a large number of police, in plainclothes as well as in uniform, were also present.

The main Nazareth mass, in the Church of the Annunciation, as well as masses in other churches, were scheduled for 7 p.m., to enable worshippers to get home to view the mass from Bethlehem on television.

Palestinian entry eased for Ramadan

Tens of thousands expected to attend prayers at the Aksa Mosque today

By MARGOT DUDKEVITCH and ELI WOHLGELERWITZ

In a Ramadan gesture to Palestinian Moslems, Israel will ease entry restrictions today to allow people from the West Bank and Gaza to attend prayers at the Aksa Mosque.

Civil Administration spokesman Lt. Peter Lerner said Palestinians younger than 16, males over 35, and females over 30 will be allowed to enter without permits.

He added buses will take them from the A-Ram and Gilo checkpoints to the mosque and they will be based back to the checkpoints at the end of prayers. Gazans will be allowed to attend after coordination with the Palestinian Authority.

Security forces will appraise the situation over the next week to decide whether to continue the policy on other Fridays during Ramadan, Lerner added.

Jerusalem police and supplementary security units will be out in force today. Jerusalem police spokesman Shmuel Ben-Ruby said patrols and roadblocks will also be increased and a police helicopter will hover overhead to direct traffic.

Beginning early this morning, security forces will spread out in

the eastern parts of the capital, inside the Old City, and throughout nearby Arab villages, he said.

"Police intend to act strictly and firmly to prevent anyone from trying to cause any disruption to the prayers or to public order, or who breaks the law during the holiday and the prayer services," said Ben-Ruby.

Police are extra cautious this year, following the recent demonstrations over the release of Palestinian prisoners. There has also been a rise in incidents of Palestinians throwing Molotov cocktails.

Late Wednesday night, near Beit Safafa, an incendiary device was thrown at an empty bus. Two Palestinian youths were arrested.

Last year an estimated 170,000 worshippers gathered outside the Dome of the Rock and the Aksa Mosque on the first Friday of Ramadan.

The sermon that day by Hamad Bitawi, supervisor of the Moslem religious courts in the West Bank, claimed that the Israeli government was scheming to damage the mosque. His remarks did not trigger any disturbances, as worshippers dispersed without clashing with police.

Hawatmeh weighs meeting with Arafat

By BEN LYNNFIELD

In an effort at conciliation, officials in the Palestinian Authority and leaders of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine are trying to arrange a meeting between PA Chairman Yasser Arafat and DFLP leader Nayef Hawatmeh.

It would be the first meeting between the two leaders since the signing of the Oslo Agreement in 1993, which was strongly opposed by the DFLP.

The official PA radio station, the Voice of Palestine, reported yesterday that, following up on a Wednesday night meeting in Ramallah with DFLP leaders, Arafat is to meet with Hawatmeh in Cairo. It did not set a date.

DFLP officials in Ramallah confirmed that contacts are underway, but said Hawatmeh and other leaders are still deciding whether to go ahead with the meeting. They are apparently wary of having the DFLP used as window-dressing for pluralism under the Arafat dominated self-rule system.

The DFLP, once a force to be reckoned with in internal Palestinian politics, carried out deadly terrorist attacks against Israel during the 1970s and 1980s, including against a school in Ma'alot in May 1974, when 24 civilians, mostly children, and one soldier were killed in an exchange of fire with three DFLP gunmen.

Headed by Hawatmeh since its establishment in 1969, the DFLP held a seat on the unified national leadership of the intifada. Over the years it was also instrumental in the passage of numerous Palestine National Council resolutions, including the one in 1988 that recognized the partition of Palestine and endorsed negotiations emanating from UN Resolution 242.

Like other left-wing Palestinian factions, its influence has dwindled in recent years, while Hamas has surged ahead with its message of militant religious empowerment. The DFLP was also weakened by internal feuding, and the breakaway of a faction led by Hawatmeh's deputy, Yasser Abed Rabbo, who is now the PA minister of culture.

During the DFLP's heyday, Hawatmeh was a proponent of worldwide revolution, of which the Palestinian revolution was to be a preliminary stage.

Today, however, the DFLP's goal is more modest: to stay on the map and wield some influence on crucial decisions ahead.

"The main question is what to do in the final status negotiations, because they will have influence on Palestinians for decades," said Daoud Telhami, a member of the DFLP's political bureau. "We have to create some kind of legislative organ or an elected Palestine National Council to supervise these negotiations. We are not thinking of playing a role in the cabinet, but mostly to have a role through influencing Palestinian society." Arafat, for his part, would like to be able to use national unity - or at least the appearance of it - to boost the drive towards statehood.

The DFLP supports a two-state solution, according to Telhami, but believes Arafat made a grave mistake in agreeing to Oslo, in part because it did not stop settlement activity. "We are not in principle against negotiations with Israel but we would have preferred a process in which we know the end of the process," he said.

A major challenge the group faces in trying to revive its influence is that Hawatmeh and other top leaders are in Damascus. Two top leaders, Ramzi Rabah and Qais Abdel-Karim, were recently permitted to move to the Palestinian self-rule areas from Lebanon.

Telhami says Hawatmeh has asked for similar permission, but that Israeli authorities rejected the application, saying that the DFLP leader, who was born in Jordan, is "Jordanian and not Palestinian."

Slomo Dror, spokesman for the Coordinator of Activities in the Territories said last night that no application has been filed on Hawatmeh's behalf.

"If he will change his attitude and declare he is against terrorism and will try the political process and negotiation, I believe we will not have any problem with allowing him to enter," he said.

Damage assessment begins in North

By DAVID RUDGE

Quiet returned to the northern border yesterday as the task continued of assessing and repairing the damage wreaked by Hizbullah's Wednesday morning Karyusha barrage.

Schools and kindergartens, factories, shops, and offices reopened after being closed since Tuesday

evening, when residents were ordered to enter bomb shelters and remain there.

Of the 16 people treated mainly for shock and relatively light injuries, four remained in Safed's Rebecca Sieff Hospital, including carpenter Rafi Amram who was hit in the chest by shrapnel and moderately wounded. His condition was reported to be improving.

Ma'alot Mayor Shlomo Buhbut, chairman of the forum of heads of confrontation line communities, said dozens of homes and businesses, including a bank, were damaged, several badly, in Kiryat Shmuna and its environs and in parts of Western Galilee.

"We estimate the cost of damage to property to be about NIS 25 million and about as much again in indirect damage - lost production and earnings in factories, agriculture, tourism, and all other forms of work," said Buhbut.

Members of the forum met with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu when he visited Kiryat Shmuna on Wednesday to inspect the damage. Buhbut said Netanyahu had promised that additional budgets allocated to northern towns and villages after Operation

ued, as would tax breaks for residents.

Nevertheless, Buhbut said that he and some other council heads complained that the North is being held hostage by Hizbullah. He called on the government to implement the slogan: "If it's not quiet in the north, it won't be quiet in Beirut."

Reuven Weinberg, owner of the Alaska Inn in Metulla, said he along with dozens of other hoteliers in the North had been inundated with cancellations.

"We had the same in August and now this time. Instead of being full over the weekend, we have only 10 rooms occupied; the rest will be empty because people have cancelled," said Weinberg.

"This wasn't the first attack and it probably won't be the last. We all know that and so does the govern-

ment, why more isn't done to promote and support tourism in Upper Galilee.

"Eilat, for instance, doesn't have a security problem. I think that at least we should receive the same as the people in Eilat, where they don't have to pay VAT. This might encourage more people to come here because it would be cheaper for them, apart from being a beautiful part of the country."

Weinberg noted that he had changed the name of the hotel from Sheleg Halevanon to Alaska Inn because of the bad connotation the word Lebanon conjures up in the minds of foreign tour operators and travel agents. "Our hotel has been here for 102 years with the same name. It wasn't an easy decision to change it after so long, but the name was actually hurting the business."

Some damage, however, was even less conspicuous.

A woman in the early stages of pregnancy who had been staying with her family in Kiryat Shmuna during the alert lost one of the twins she was carrying, apparently because of the shock when their home suffered a direct hit. The other fetus is said to be in serious condition.

Anat Ben-Marji, 28, was born and raised in Kiryat Shmuna, but she has not been able to come to terms with the trauma caused by the Karyushas.

"Every time there is a boom, I want to run to the bomb shelter," said Ben-Marji. "My son is five and he also suffers from the Karyusha syndrome. A lot of my friends have left because of this and I would too, but I don't want to move far away from my parents."

"Something has to be done by the government about the Lebanon problem. Our soldiers are being killed and wounded in the security zone, but their presence does not prevent the rocket attacks. This is the problem and this has to be solved."

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Grapes of Wrath would be continued, which is why I can't understand...

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Over the years The Jerusalem Post Pessah Handicrafts Fair* has brought artists and craftsmen together with our readers and friends for an enjoyable and profitable day out. This coming Pessah, the fair is going to be much bigger and even better. It will take place on Monday, April 5th, at Kibbutz Tzora near Beit Shemesh, convenient to all, midway between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. The extra large area in which the fair will be held, means that we can accommodate many more exhibitors and have more room for the public to move around.

If you create top quality handicrafts or have goods and services that you want to present to an interested public and wish to book a stand at the fair, please contact Illy or Judy at The Funds, 02-537-6528 - Sunday to Thursday 8am to 3pm. All proceeds from the fair will be used to help Israel's needy children, elderly or new immigrants.

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Worker's Rights

The following rights some of what Israeli Labor Law demands that all workers in Israel, legal or illegal, Israeli or migrant, receive from their employers.

Minimum Wage: NIS 2622 for 186 hours of work a month (14.10 NIS/hour)

Travel Allowance: Workers who pay their own transportation expenses to work must be reimbursed by their employers for this expense up to 17.03 per day.

Annual vacation: Every worker is entitled to 12 days of paid holiday a year (in addition to Shabbat).

Holidays: Workers are entitled to 9 paid religious holidays a year (according to their religion) after they have been working three months. If the holiday falls on Shabbat, the worker is not paid for that holiday.

Recuperation Pay: After one full year of work every worker is entitled to five days of recuperation pay at a rate of NIS260 per day.

Payment of Wages: Workers salaries must be paid by no later than the 10th of the following month.

Sick Pay: Workers absent from work due to illness should be paid 75% of their wages (starting with the third day) upon presenting a doctor's note.

Work Accidents: Workers injured during the course of their work or in transit to their work (legally or illegally employed) are entitled to compensation from the National Insurance.

Maternity Payments: All women workers are entitled to coverage for hospitalization when giving birth; a one time birth grant; and three months of paid maternity leave from the National Insurance.

Severance pay: Workers fired after at least one full year of work must be paid severance pay at a rate of one month's salary for every year worked.

- No employer of agency is allowed to hold or confiscate your passport against your will. It is illegal.
- No employer or agency can deport you from Israel.
- Make sure that your employer is not taking illegal deductions from your salary. If you suspect this you can bring your salary slip to Kav La'Oved or the Ministry of Labor to be examined.
- Every migrant worker (registered or not) can open up a NIS bank account at any bank in Israel upon presentation of a passport.
- Every worker is entitled to receive emergency medical care at all hospitals in Israel whether you have medical insurance or not and whether you have a visa or not.

Useful telephone numbers:

Hotline for Deportees/Arrested Workers: 03-517 3533

Clinic for Migrant Workers: 03-687 5695
27 Cheliov St., Tel Aviv
Open: Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday 17:00-21:00
Friday (for children only) 9:00-13:00

Ministry of Labor: 03-512 5377

If you have any questions or believe that your rights have been violated call Kav La'Oved, Sunday - Thursday 12:00-17:00 and Friday (9:00-13:00). Telephone 03-510 2266 or 03-510 1366

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سكنا من الاربعين

New Holocaust lawsuit filed in US

By MARILYN HENRY

NEW YORK - As another lawsuit was filed in an American federal court to recover Holocaust-era assets in European banks, the World Jewish Restitution Organization appealed to the court to give it formal standing in the \$1.25 billion case against the Swiss banks.

In a suit filed Wednesday in the US District Court in Brooklyn, Chase Manhattan, JP Morgan, and seven French banks were accused of failing to return Jewish accounts and safe-deposit assets seized during the German occupation of France. The plaintiffs live in Israel, France, Canada, and Australia.

It was the second suit filed by Manhattan attorney Kenneth F. McCallion against French banks, and the first to name American

banks. In addition, there are competing lawsuits in separate American federal courts against German banks and industries, seeking compensation for slave labor claims, as well as suits against European insurers for failure to honor war-era policies.

Last week, Barclays Bank agreed to a \$3.6 million settlement for the restitution of Jewish assets held by its French branch, McCallion said.

That amount was based on the assets of some 335 depositors in 1941 who may have been Jewish. The remainder, after claims are paid, will be donated to a French institution that is engaged in Holocaust research, he said.

Chase Manhattan called McCallion's suit "unnecessary," saying it has been in discussions with the World Jewish Congress

in an effort to "establish a process for facilitating payment to former customers of the Chase Bank of Paris or their heirs whose accounts were frozen and subsequently seized by the Vichy French or Nazis." The WJC is one of the members of the WJRO, which earlier this month filed a "motion to intervene" in the \$1.25 billion settlement of claims against the Swiss banks UBS and Credit Suisse. The WJC originally opposed the lawsuit.

That settlement, which was announced four months ago, is expected to be formalized next month, although there are not yet plans to distribute the funds.

The WJRO has no formal standing before the court and is trying to protect its position and influence the process. It asked the court to grant it special status to represent Holocaust survivors in

the settlement, to be designated as a signatory to the agreement, and to be appointed as an adviser to the "special master," who will be appointed next month to administer the settlement. The master will be Judah Gribetz, former chairman of the New York Jewish Community Relations Council.

Some within the WJRO also are trying to protect the principle that it is the Jewish community that should be responsible for deciding what happens to restored Jewish property.

Others, however, argue that judicial scrutiny is needed to ensure a fair and orderly distribution in which survivors are guaranteed to have a voice.

In addition, survivors have expressed irritation at the sluggish, secretive, and contentious process by which the WJRO allo-

cated the \$200 million Swiss humanitarian fund.

"I think the WJRO feels, quite justifiably, that it played a major role in putting the issue on the public agenda. It's true and we owe them a debt of gratitude for it," said Burt Neuborne, a professor at New York University Law School who was appointed by the court to the plaintiffs' lawyers executive committee.

But, Neuborne said he would oppose any special formal role for the WJRO.

"We are setting up an absolutely open, absolutely fair, absolutely transparent mechanism for making the ultimate distribution," Neuborne said. "They already have earned a very special voice, but they can't have more than a voice. We can't cede power to them. It would be unfair to everyone else."

PA security officer released on bail

By AMY KLEIN

A Palestinian Authority intelligence officer suspected of kidnapping an Israeli citizen was released on NIS 30,000 bail yesterday, because of insufficient evidence.

Jerusalem District Court Judge Gideon Ginat rejected the state's request to remand Nasser Fandi until the end of legal proceedings. He also said the case should be reviewed, because Fandi was arrested in Abu Dis in Area B, which is under Palestinian Authority control in civil matters. According to the interim agreements of 1995, all arrests by Israeli police in that area must be coordinated beforehand with the PA, and there had been no such coordination, Ginat said.

Judea and Samaria police spokesman Ofer Sivan said the Israel Police has full control in matters of security in Area B, and does not have to consult with PA officials before making arrests there.

Fandi was arrested three weeks ago on suspicion of kidnapping Rami Hamad from a gas station near the Abu Dis junction last July. Hamad complained that he was brought by Fandi and others to Ramallah, where he was interrogated by the Palestinian Police, beaten, and released.

Tawfik Tarawi, director of Palestinian General Intelligence in the West Bank, said the Israel Police had no right to arrest Fandi in the first place, because he is a PA security official. "We have complained to the Israeli authorities and to the American officials in bilateral meetings," Tarawi said. "They have arrested many of our officials - this is just one instance."

Item contributed to this report.



Young Zionist leaders meet

Zionist youth leaders from Israel and the Diaspora meet in the capital's Jerusalem Gate Hotel yesterday to discuss contemporary issues and share ideas and information at the Second World Zionist Congress for Youth. Around 170 delegates are attending the four-day conference, which, according to chief Tel Aviv delegate Shirley Silbersatz, aims to promote unity between Jewish youth movements throughout the world.

(Judea Haim)

Murdered man's wife protests escape of killer

By Margot Dudkevitch

Six months pregnant, Tali Vargas held a symbolic 15-minute vigil on the seam of Palestinian and Israeli-controlled Hebron yesterday to protest the escape from Juneid Prison of the man who murdered her husband Danny.

The news that terrorist Jamil Jadhallah was free was like "throwing salt on unhealed wounds," she said, after returning home from Kikar Hashoter, where HI meets

But, she added, "I don't believe his escape is part of what is called the Palestinian Authority's revolving door policy - I never dabbled in politics and neither did Danny. I prefer to take things at face value," she said.

Tali's brother-in-law, Kessar, who joined her in the vigil, said he first heard of Jadhallah's escape from friends on Wednesday.



D. Vargas (Flash 90)

"I think Tali is entitled to know exactly what happened," he said. "We place our faith in the Israeli security forces and hope they will do everything to capture him and ensure justice is served."

Kessar said, but he was upset that since his brother's murder two months ago no one from the security forces had met with him or Tali to inform them how Danny

was killed. His body was found by the roadside apparently shot from a car, which fled to Palestinian-controlled HI.

"As long as Jadhallah is free, Jewish lives are in danger," he added.

Tali says she has no intention of leaving Kiryat Arba, where she lives in her apartment together with her three-year-old son and relatives who have come to her aid. But she hasn't felt ready to return to work as a secretary at a local school.

Foreign Ministry blasts top Russian Communist's antisemitism

By ARYEH DEAN COHEN

A Foreign Ministry spokesman yesterday strongly condemned the statements made by Russian Communist Party chief Gennady Zyuganov on Wednesday, in which he accused Jews of bringing on the "extinction" of the Russian people and the country's economic woes.

"Our people are not blind. They cannot fail to see that the spread of Zionism in the state government in Russia is one of the reasons for the current catastrophic condition of the country, the mass impoverishment and the process of extinction of its people," Zyuganov wrote in an open letter published in Moscow.

"This statement proves his utter foolishness regarding the definition of the term Zionism, its goals, and what it's all about. Israel strongly condemns and expresses its disgust with this antisemitic declaration which contributes nothing to relations between the Russian people and the Jewish

people and the State of Israel. Israel hopes that the Russian authorities will find the proper ways to deal with this serious phenomenon," a Foreign Ministry spokesman said last night.

He said Zyuganov's remarks "are taken from the infamous tradition of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, and naturally do not jive with his claims that his party is one that seeks to build a democratic society in Russia."

"Using the Jews as a scapegoat is an old weapon of antisemitism and the regime to reduce the social tensions and disappointment in what is going on," Industry and Trade Minister Naftali Bennett said, who also heads the Interministerial Committee on Diaspora Affairs, said.

"What is happening today in Russia does not augur well for the Jews, Russia itself or a democratic regime. A democratic regime must defend itself, and the conclusions must be drawn in Russia. As regards Israel, we must understand that in this period, it's very

important to step up our ties, involvement, and activity among Russian Jews and in the political sphere."

Yisrael Ba'aliya MK Roman Bronfman said that Zyuganov's remarks are "another escalation of antisemitic remarks" which are spreading in Russia. "We learn from history that the worse the economic conditions in Russia are, foreigners and particularly Jews are always blamed."

While individual comments like Zyuganov's might not have an influence on Russian Jews considering immigrating to Israel, "this recent wave in the political arena shows that antisemitism is growing among the common folk as well, and that worries me much more than any expression by any particular leader."

"[President Boris] Yeltsin must react because only tough responses can stop these statements," Bronfman said.

Dr. Stefani Hoffman, head of the Mayrock Center for Russian, Central Asian and East

European Studies at the Hebrew University, said it is significant that Zyuganov had aimed his criticism at "Zionists" and not Jews. "This may be a way of trying to diminish some of the spoken objections, by saying: 'Well, it's not that I'm against the Jews as a race; suddenly it's the Zionists. But who are the Zionists?'"

"It's surprising in a way that he's back to Zionism, back to the old Soviet routine where it was forbidden to be antisemitic politically, and it was the Zionists who were responsible for all the problems," Hoffman said.

"The trend in the post-Soviet era has been to stick with the Jews, and not blame the Zionists in their relationship to Israel. Israel kind of dropped out as the problem, and the problem was more the Jews who were in Russia, who were not native and connected more with a US conspiracy, which was seen as part of a long-term plan to destroy Russia. But Israel really didn't figure in this so much."

NEWS

in brief

High Court asked to order heart's return

James Sinclair, brother of Alisdair Sinclair, the Scot who died in police custody earlier this year, yesterday petitioned the High Court for the return of his brother's missing internal organs. Sinclair believes that his brother's heart and possibly other body parts were harvested by the Forensic Institute at Abu Kabir when an autopsy was performed.

Nitzana Darshan-Leitner, Sinclair's lawyer, said yesterday, "We would like to know by who's permission they removed the body parts and kept them without the family's knowledge."

Earlier this week, the Health Ministry said the heart had been removed for further examination and was supplied to the family at a later date.

Naomi Simons

HU professor wins Israel Prize in Jewish thought

Prof. Moshe Idel has won this year's Israel Prize in Jewish thought yesterday, the Education Ministry announced yesterday.

Idel, 51, who heads the Jewish Thought Department at Hebrew University, was cited for his contribution to research in Kabbala, which the prize committee said had offered a "new and revolutionary" view of the subject. He will receive the prize along with the rest of the winners on Independence Day. Aryeh Dean Cohen



Moshe Idel

Internet firm seeks 'Israeli Person of the Year'

Netking, a local Internet megastore, is conducting a survey to choose the Israeli Person of the Year, from among 25 candidates both in Israel and around the world. Netking is holding the survey along with the magazine *Internet World*. Among those in the running are Bill Clinton, Monica Lewinsky, Saddam Hussein, Binyamin Netanyahu, Bill Gates, Jerry Seinfeld, and Rabbi Ovadia Yosef.

One can vote for up to five in the list by entering the site at www.netking.com/1998. The final results will be made public on the site on January 1.

Judy Siegel

New indictment against Hoter-Yishai

The State Attorney's Office has decided to resubmit its indictment against Israel Bar Association chairman Dror Hoter-Yishai for contempt of court, following his alleged attacks on Judge Ziva Hadassi-Herman.

The State Attorney's Office informed the High Court of Justice of its decision following a petition by the Movement for Quality Government, which declared its intention to re-petition the court against Hoter-Yishai's membership in the committee for the appointment of judges.

Itm

Health Ministry invites comments on malpractice proposals

By JUDY SIEGEL

A Health Ministry committee that has been sitting for four years to make recommendations for reducing the number of medical negligence lawsuits has now produced a draft open for comments by the public.

The 140-page Hebrew document has been put on the ministry's Internet site (www.health.gov.il/dh).

The Rabin government decided five years ago to establish such a committee; it took a year for the chairman, Jaffa District Court Judge Gavriel Kling, and the other 21 members to be appointed.

The government decided to appoint a committee out of concern over a surge of highly publicized medical negligence suits that triggered even more suits and larger claims. This caused doctors to adopt so-called "defensive medicine," ordering unnecessary tests to protect themselves from lawsuits. Since then, the situation has only worsened.

According to a staffer in the office of the ministry's legal adviser, the committee met 23 times

over the past four years, heard 30 witnesses, and examined position papers from 15 organizations and individuals. Now the committee is ready to public comments on its recommendations. These include:

- Limits would be placed on the sums that could be won for certain types of negligence claims.
- Practitioners of all types of conventional medicine and paramedical staffs would be required to take out insurance against negligence.
- Retired practitioners (or their former employers) would have to continue paying for insurance after going on pension.
- Risk would be shared among a number of insurers.
- The proceedings of investigatory committees would be kept secret so that doctors would not be afraid to give evidence.

Those who do not have Internet access may get a Hebrew copy of the entire report, on a disk, by writing to the office of the ministry's legal adviser in Jerusalem.

The official could not predict when the final recommendations will be presented to the health minister.

Winter Vacation in Eilat

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Ms. Caroline Rnda, 521 Fifth Avenue, 25th Floor, New York, NY 10175;
E-mail <CRndaNY@aol.com>
or in Israel - Shalom Bronstein, Hizkiyah Hamelech 47/4,
Jerusalem 93224;
E-mail <ryga@netvision.net.il>

Spirits of place

Even Bethlehem is not Christmassy, and Israel is peevishly anti-Christmas. A forlorn tree in a Dizengoff pizza parlor or tinsel flapping hopelessly in a seedy central bus station kiosk do not cut it as gestures to tourists.

For those who haven't noticed, today is Christmas, and for those who do notice, it's one miserable day to be in the Middle East. We of the Christmas culture have two choices on this day - ignore it or leave.

That may sound odd, since it all began in the Middle East. In Bethlehem and in Nazareth, Jesus was a Jew, the most ancient Christians are Arab. I'm afraid none of those is Christmassy.

The Christmas we grew up with in Europe or America is not really the Christmas of Bethlehem or Israel. For us, the spirit of Christmas is the spirit of place, rather than the spirit of the religion that celebrates it. It is the time of the year when we get the urge to be somewhere ... well ... Christmassy.

Baby who?

Early Christians did not celebrate the birth of Jesus, because they considered the veneration of anyone's birthday to be pagan. Christmas did not start being accepted until the fifth century, when it already had adopted most of the customs of the Roman Saturnalia (golden age), Sigillaria, (children's feast of dolls), and Dies Natalis Invicti Solis, the birthday of the unconquered sun, a solstice celebration.

The northern nations' ancient need for winter festivals to relieve the seasonal gloom was hijacked by new do-gooders, for religious reasons.

Most of the trappings of the modern Christmas come not from Bethlehem, but from Scandinavia, and from my ancestors, the Druid Celts. Even Santa Claus was a Turk. St. Nicholas of Myra, whom early Dutch settlers brought (as Sinterklaas) to New York. The tree, logs, holly, and mistletoe descend from Norse and Celtic Druid tree worship.

Celtic green

The Christmas candle and subsequent other lights came from Ireland; they were not borrowed from Hanukkah, as some ecumenical revisionists would have us believe. The Yule log was once burned in the northlands in honor of the god Thor. The mistletoe is the centerpiece of one of the loveliest of Norse legends of Frigg, their love goddess. Enemies who met under it would honor a truce for a day. (Let's send Bibi and Yasser some.) Norway provided the tree, and only a nation as inept in culinary matters as the English

could have invented plum pudding.

The office party with its orgy of gin-guzzling and sex-behind-the-filing-cabinet survived as the last true heir of Saturnalia, until the advent of harassment suits.

In the Ireland of my youth, Christmas was more pagan and magically Celtic than Catholic. It was tramping through damp enchanted December woods to gather red-berried holly, pungent green ivy, pagan mistletoe. It was Christmas pudding boiled in white linen cloths over a roaring peat fire, the stone floor buffed (by me) to warm gleams with Cardinal Red polish. Carols crackled in from England on a big Pye radio. Non-drinker Dad came home from work three hours late, with a silly grin on his face, whiskey on his breath, a bedraggled fir tree strapped to his bicycle, and last-minute guilt gifts for his tight-lipped wife and two giggling kids.

Christmas was laying out a glass of sherry and a slice of homemade cake for Santa Claus, then lying in the chilly dark unable to sleep. Santa was no ho ho ho! but a figure of delicious and sinister terror who rewarded only the good.

Lose the religion

Christmas was Santa's train set that exhausted its batteries running circles under the bed before dawn, and an enchanted little sister endlessly hugging a big doll that whined "ma-ma" without pause. The obligatory religious part, the tramp to church, was the bore. Wouldn't the priest ever shut up? What had Christmas to do with religion anyway?

A couple of years ago I journeyed to Celtic Britain for Christmas and in a snow-clad French village I watched my daughter, her husband and the new babies do it all again. The only bit they have left out since the old days is the religion, and the spirit seems none the worse for it. In Europe, it remains a kind and loving magical season, and in our culture, ineffably Celtic and mysterious.

When expatriates celebrate Christmas on far-flung shores, the affair always has the feeling of uttered improvisation and support-group pathos. Christmas is first and foremost about being "at home."

If you're not at home, it's not Christmas. A kibbutz friend just wisely e-mailed me about how she misses New York's Christmas-time, and the smell of roasted chestnuts crackling in the frozen streets. See? You don't have to be Jewish to love Christmas, but it helps.

Column One



Thomas O'Dwyer



White Christmas

Six-year-old Catie Carisson frolics on her front lawn in Warwick, Rhode Island, yesterday after a storm answered her Christmas wish by dropping 11 centimeters of snow. (AP)

US troops mark Christmas in Kuwaiti desert

KUWAIT (AP) - There was not a tree in sight, let alone one with decorations, and instead of snow they had sand, plenty of it. But some 1,000 US Marines tried to make the best of Christmas Eve in the Kuwaiti desert yesterday.

The chaplain of the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit read from the Bible. The cooks served a hot dinner of lasagna, baked beans and rice. And the troops contributed their

own sense of the occasion.

"We will light a candle, sing Christmas carols, and exchange rocks for presents," said Sgt. Tony Williams of Waco, Texas.

Lance Cpl. Michael Morris recommended the dinner's crumb cake. It was extra crunchy, he said - with sand.

The Marines arrived in Kuwait earlier this week, after US and British forces carried out four days of airstrikes against Iraq over the UN weapons inspection

impasses.

The United States stationed some 5,000 troops in Kuwait to protect the oil-rich state from any Iraqi counterattack.

Cpl. Robert Katz of New Rochelle, N.Y., said Christmas was about being with the people dearest to your heart. "We're all friends and family here," among the special events for the occasion: The men held a competition to see who could eat the best Christmas tree on the sandy

walls of their trenches.

As Sgt. Williams put it, "We were not afforded the opportunity to buy things, so we have to make do with our surroundings." But the troops will have a real Christmas present today. They are being flown out of the sandy wastes to USS Belleau Wood, their amphibious assault ship in the Persian Gulf. On board they can expect a Christmas dinner with all the trimmings that the US Navy can provide.

Desert Fox chief: Saddam faces threat within Iraq

ABOARD E4B NATIONAL AIRBORNE OPERATIONS CENTER (Reuters) - US intelligence suggests Iraqi President Saddam Hussein faces growing opposition at home that could undermine his power, the US Marine Gen. Anthony Zinni, who directed last week's military pounding of Baghdad, said yesterday.

While stressing that his information was tentative, he said there are credible signs that opposition is mounting within Iraq, prompting Saddam to shake up his mili-

tary and crack down on dissenters as the United States launched its air attack.

"We're seeing signs that he's having problems and signs that he's reacting to those problems," Zinni said on board the US military plane carrying him, Defense Secretary William Cohen, and other top military officials to Washington after a two-day visit to the Gulf.

Zinni cited changes by Saddam in the structure of the military, from dividing the country into four sectors and concentrating

power in the hands of loyalists, to increasing his own internal security.

Zinni said the bombing severely set back Iraq's military operations and that the US is prepared to strike again if needed. "We have sufficient force to do what we need to do," he said.

Zinni said UN weapons inspectors could not do their jobs because of Saddam's interference. "So now we're relying on our own intelligence sources for that."

He said Washington had good reason to believe Saddam is

"experiencing more internal problems than he has in the past. We're seeing things that he's doing, reports that we're getting, military movements, security steps, reorganizations, elimination of leadership... that lead us to believe there is more going on now than we've seen in the past," he said. "They're the kinds of things that threaten his control and could potentially threaten his regime."

But Zinni stressed that it was too soon to say whether the opposition would gain momentum or collapse under pressure from Saddam.

Two dead in Turkey suicide bombing

TURKEY (Reuters) - A woman thought to be a Kurdish rebel set off a bomb outside an army barracks in east Turkey yesterday, killing herself and a passer-by in the third suicide attack targeting security forces since mid-November.

Security officials said twenty-two people, including 14 soldiers, were injured in the blast in the town of Van.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility, but a Kurdish television channel said the separatist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) was behind the explosion.

A security official said yesterday's bomb was set off by a woman as she approached a military minibus at around 7:45 a.m.

"A big disaster was avoided because the military personnel had not got off the vehicle when the explosion occurred," Van provincial governor Abdulkadir Sari was quoted as saying.

The suicide attack was the third of its kind since PKK leader Ocalan was detained in Rome. On November 17, a PKK guerrilla killed herself and wounded six people in a bomb blast outside a police station in the southeastern town of Yuzsekova.

Two weeks later, another female rebel blew herself up and injured 14 people in an explosion in the southeastern town of Lice.

PKK leader Ocalan is wanted by Turkey on treason charges but Italy will not hand him over because the Italian constitution forbids extradition if a suspect may face the death penalty.

Ankara holds Ocalan responsible for the deaths of more than 29,000 people in the PKK's 14-year-old fight for self-rule in the mainly Kurdish southeast of Turkey.

US weighing more sanctions against Belgrade

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The United States and other UN Security Council members are weighing extra sanctions against Yugoslavia if it does not send three Yugoslav officers to trial in The Hague, the United States said yesterday.

The officers, known as the Vukovar Three, are accused of taking part in the murder of 260 unarmed men near the Croatian town of Vukovar in 1991.

They appeared in court in Belgrade last week as witnesses in an internal investigation of the incident, in defiance of an extradition order from the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague.

Acting State Department spokesman Lee McClelleny said of the hearing: "We strongly condemn the newest move by the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) to initiate unilateral, sham proceedings against the men. This latest act of defiance is just another in a long series of violations by FRY authorities, who have failed to comply with the Tribunal's orders."

An "outer wall" of sanctions means that Belgrade cannot join international organizations or receive assistance from international financial institutions.

The tribunal ruled on December 14 that Belgrade must extradite the three army officers - Mile Mrksic, Veselin Stijevic, and Miroslav Radic - so they can be tried.

MERIDOR

Continued from Page 1

"Dan Meridor is on a different level [than other politicians]," MK David Magen (Geshet) told the crowd. "It's no secret that Menachem Begin saw him as his successor. Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert has said there is no one more worthy than Dan Meridor to be the prime minister. [Ze'ev] Benny Begin has said similar things."

"Everyone who is familiar with the political scene knows... that the most suitable man is Dan Meridor." However, when asked which other MKs are joining forces with Meridor, the only name Magen would mention was that of Eliezer Zandberg (Tsimet).

Magen said he hopes to build up a network of activists that will enable the new party to gain the support of new immigrants and youth, as well as of the religious and the state's non-Jewish residents.

Meridor criticized the current leadership for "looking back at opinion polls instead of looking forward to do what the people need."

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CHAYA SUSSHOLZ ז"ל

we will gather at her graveside at the Har Tamir section of the Har Hamenuhot Cemetery in Jerusalem on Wednesday, December 30, 1998 (11 Tevet 5759), at 3 p.m.

This will be followed by the Siyum of Mishna studies in her memory at 51 Rehov Hizkiyahu Hamelech, Jerusalem

The family.

For details call 02-561-9637, 02-993-2639, 02-993-1117

SHAHAK

Continued from Page 1

Referring to the attacks by his political rivals, he said it is time to change the manner and style of conduct and political debate in the country.

"We must show respect even to those who think differently. If we have mutual respect... then we can change not merely the political debate, but also the way we live here, and make high-level decisions in a better way," he said.

Shahak then drove to Jerusalem to meet President Ezer Weizman for an hour's tête-à-tête. Neither made a statement following the meeting.

As he was leaving, he stopped to talk to a group of bereaved mothers who have been demonstrating outside Beit Hanassi for the past four weeks, demanding the cabi-

net make the Lebanon issue the top national priority. The mothers complained that, despite their prolonged strike, cabinet ministers would not meet with them. They intend to end their vigil today.

Shahak then went to his office and held several meetings with MKs from various parties in an effort to put together a party. Mordechai telephoned Shahak yesterday and wished him all the best.

Soon after officially hanging up his uniform, Shahak came under criticism from both Left and Right.

The Likud issued a statement saying, "Shahak and Barak can continue to try to hide that they are out and out leftists, but denial won't help them trick the public concerning their leftist political ways." The statement also condemned Shahak for having political contacts while still in uniform,

"despite trying to present himself as being for decent, clean, political procedure."

Deputy Minister Michael Eitan (Likud) compared Shahak and Barak to young children arguing about "who started it." He called on the national and centrist public interested in peace and security not to follow either Barak or Shahak, whom he said would be pulled left by Meretz.

Labor Party secretary-general Ra'an Cohen issued a statement saying, "Someone who cares about the unity of the people should join hands rather than split and divide the peace camp."

He said the centrist party would "provide an escape hatch for MKs who prefer personal interests over political interests, and the result is a supermarket of populist opinions."

Labor whip Elie Goldschmidt used similar terms, describing the

centrist party as "a group of - albeit nice - people who have absolutely nothing to do with ideology. It's a virtual reality party. I have called it the Ego Trip Party for those who have not found their place in the traditional parties and are trying to group together to get some political power."

He criticized Shahak, who was portrayed in a Ha'aretz article as trying to distance himself from Labor because it is perceived as left-wing. He noted that Shahak is nonetheless proud to count himself as having been close to party leader Yitzhak Rabin.

Third Way leader Avigdor Kahalani said he respects Shahak's decision to enter politics and said there is a place there for all those who feel they have something to contribute. Kahalani stressed that The Third Way intends continuing as an independent party.

SYNDROME

Continued from Page 1

In a lecture at a conference on "Tourism and Psychopathology: Jerusalem Towards the Year 2000," Landes said he and his colleagues will be closely watching the effect of the new

millennium on pilgrims to Israel.

The conference, organized by the Israel Psychiatric Society and the Israel Medical Association, brought over 150 psychiatrists and other professionals to Jerusalem's Bible Lands Museum.

"Jerusalem Syndrome" is the condition, usually temporary but sometimes permanent, in which religious pilgrims - non-Jewish or Jewish, with a history of mental illness or not - tour holy sites and begin to display strange behavior, sometimes proclaiming that they are ancient religious figures sent on a mission to Jerusalem. Most of them are treated at the capital's Kfar Shaul Mental Health Center and sent home.

Landes suggested that within a year or two, Habad Hassidim "who don't accept the fact that their rebbe has died may try to convert Christian pilgrims who show interest in becoming Jews." He also predicted the formation of "new Christian religious movements" as a result of the mass pilgrimage, which may bring as many as eight million

people here.

"These pilgrims are coming for a profound religious experience and believe that Jesus will return to the Mount of Olives. Apocalyptic Christians will try to convert fellow Christians to their beliefs, and some will want to reach Jews as well," Landes warned. But he added optimistically that the pilgrimages could lead to new and better relationships between Jews and Christians.

Health Ministry associate director-general Dr. Boaz Lev, who is coordinating ministry proposals for coping with the medical needs of the pilgrims, said later that he is "not very worried" about expanded effects of the Jerusalem Syndrome, or of providing acute medical treatment to pilgrims while they're here.

If it begins to look more serious, he added, "we will ask the Treasury for a special allocation."

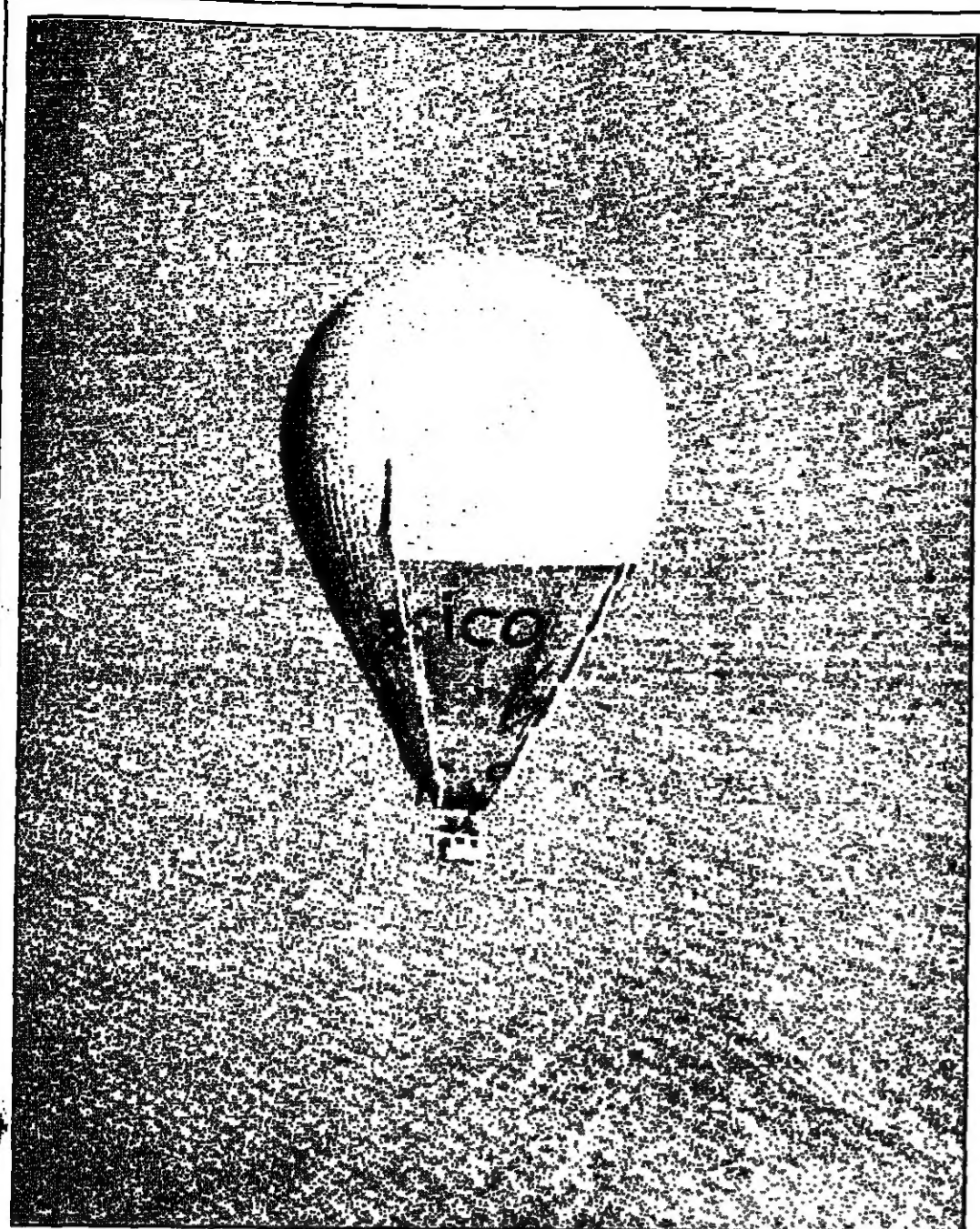
Lev is a member of the inter-ministerial committee, which includes representatives of the Tourism, Religious Affairs, Internal Security, Interior, and

other ministries, planning preparations for the mass pilgrimage. Haim Shapiro adds:

If Israel has anything to worry about during 2000, it is that fervent religious believers will come and not want to leave, according to Prof. Branda Basher of Mount Union College, Ohio.

Brasher, who spoke on "Jerusalem and End Times Beliefs of Contemporary American Christian Fundamentalists," was one of the participants in an international conference on Jerusalem in the Eschatological Thought of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, sponsored by the B'nai B'rith World Center, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, and The Hebrew University.

Brasher noted that although all the major branches of Christianity have some plans to encourage people to come to Israel for the millennium, some fundamentalists expect the world to end in or around 2000. She said that many might well arrive in 1999 or 2000 and then decide to wait, at least until the start of 2001.



ICO Global Challenger flies over Japan's Munt Fuji yesterday. (AP)

Round-the-world balloonists soar over Pacific

LONDON (AP) — A trio of balloonists soared over the Pacific Ocean at high speed yesterday, bound for the halfway point in their attempt at the first nonstop balloon voyage around the world.

British tycoon Richard Branson, American millionaire Steve Fossett, and Per Lindstrand of Sweden caught the jet stream after their passage over China on Wednesday and quickly gathered speed.

By 4:15 a.m. EST, their helium and hot-air ICO Global balloon was moving at 150 mph, and about 1,000 miles out over the Pacific, said ground crew director Mike Kendrick.

Kendrick said he was a "bit nervous" about a weather pattern developing over the Pacific. "We're not panicking yet," he

told Sky TV, explaining that a trough of high pressure was about 2,000 miles from the balloonists. "If we can average about 145 mph over the next 12 hours, or maybe 24 hours, we should be OK."

Kendrick has described the Pacific leg of the journey as the most hazardous, saying the frequency of shipping is too low to mean a rescue would be more difficult if the balloonists had to ditch their craft.

He said the ground crew was tracking the position of all ships that would be under the balloon in the Pacific.

"If we fall out of the jet stream into this trough over the Pacific then there is only one way, and that is back to Hawaii and they are going to go for a swim," Kendrick told Sky TV later.

He said the crew had been told to ascend to 30,000 feet to try to pick up the speed needed to avoid this.

"The situation is that the higher you go, the more fuel is used. So usually you trade speed for fuel," he said. "At the moment I am not interested in fuel. I need speed because we want to try and keep them dry."

The ground crew said that the 272-foot-high balloon might cross into North America at the coast of Washington state or in southern Canada. They said they are hoping the balloon reaches North America today, most likely in the evening.

The ground crew said the craft is flying at 27,000 feet to 30,000 feet — as jumbo jets do — and might be visible from the ground if the weather is clear.

UK gov't reels over loan scandal

LONDON (Reuters) — Britain's Labor government, reeling from the resignation of two ministers, scrambled yesterday to prove it is not tainted with the sleaze that brought down its Conservative predecessor.

"It worries me that the government's integrity seems to be under attack. But I don't believe our integrity is affected by this," Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott told BBC radio. "I think it's an honest government."

Peter Mandelson, architect of the Labor Party's makeover and landslide election victory, was forced to quit the cabinet Wednesday over a home-loan scandal — by far the biggest blow to the administration since it took power in May 1997.

Mandelson, 45, the trade secretary as well as Prime Minister Tony Blair's closest political strategist, stepped down after it was disclosed he had borrowed 373,000 pounds (\$625,000) from Treasury minister Geoffrey Robinson. Robinson, 60, a multi-millionaire businessman, resigned just hours later.

The two resignations were preceded, in late October, by the departure of Welsh Secretary Ron Davies, who stepped down after saying he had been robbed at knife-point at night in a London park notorious for being frequented by homosexuals.

The problem for Blair is that Labor's election victory 19 months ago was due in large part to its success in painting the previous government as sleazy. Once in power, Blair promised his administration would be "whiter than white."

Things could yet get worse for Mandelson with the opposition Conservatives demanding details of the mortgage deal on his swanky house in London's fashionable Notting Hill.

He also borrowed money from the Britannia Building Society. The society says borrowers must say if they have any other loans on a house. Failure to do so is potentially a criminal offense.

A spokesman for Mandelson said he admitted he "may not have included" details of the loan on his mortgage application.

The Conservatives, keen to keep the government on the hook, said it was another example of "Tony's cronies" in action.

"It's a public matter... and I think it is important that all the facts relating to this are made public," Conservative Party Chairman Michael Ancram said.

For a government highly attuned to the media, the front pages of Christmas Eve newspapers made horrific reading. "STUFFED," Britain's tabloid *Sun* screamed above a picture of a turkey with Mandelson's head superimposed on top.

Despite the avalanche of criticism, Mandelson's political career may not be over. In his response to Mandelson's resignation letter, Blair talked of "my belief that in the future you will achieve much, much more with us." There was media speculation that the scandal was the product of longstanding bad blood between him and Chancellor of the Exchequer (finance minister) Gordon Brown.



Mandelson (AP)



Robinson (AP)

Paper Airline's decision to fly Rushdie 'a great risk'

TEHERAN (AP) — British Airways is taking "a great risk" by allowing author Salman Rushdie to fly on its aircraft after a nine-year ban, an Iranian newspaper said yesterday.

The airline announced Wednesday that it was lifting the ban on the Indian-born British author after receiving assurances from the British Foreign Office that there is no risk in flying him.

The *Tehran Times*, a conservative English-language paper, questioned that judgment.

"The Foreign Office should not give assurances and should respect the beliefs of over one billion Muslims," it quoted unidentified experts as saying.

Rushdie was condemned to death in 1989 after the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini ruled that his book, *The Satanic Verses*, was blasphemous to Islam.

China democracy campaigner remains defiant

By CHARLES HUTZLER

BEIJING (AP) — His friend and political mentor is jailed, their budding opposition political party lacks its most potent organizer, but Zha Jianguo is not afraid.

A bag packed with toothbrush, toothpaste and medicine lies ready at his Beijing home for the day Chinese police take him away. He has told police interrogators he expects to be jailed, likely for a few years less than the 13 given China Democracy Party leader Xu Wenli on Monday.

"Democracy is a process, and in that process a small number of people will be sacrificed," Zha, a 47-year-old former manager of a computer design company and vice chairman of the party's Beijing branch, said in an interview today.

With a mixture of defiance and cool clarity about the chances for success, Zha and, he says, other China Democracy Party members will continue organizing and campaigning for change.

His tenacity holds, despite the summary trials and harsh punishments for Xu, Wang Youcai and Qin Yongmin — prominent party principals from the provinces who were sentenced to 11 and 12 years — and despite portentous signs from the ruling Communist Party.

Chinese President Jiang Zemin called Tuesday for a yearlong nationwide police clampdown on any acts that threatened "social stability."

"Whenever any element that undermines stability raises its head, it must be resolutely nipped in the bud," Jiang said.

"Zha maintains that such tactics are unnecessary. In its manifestos, the Democracy Party espoused peaceful means to target 'the undemocratic system, not the political power of the Communist Party.'"

"We believe elections held after the establishment of a democratic system should decide who has the power," said Zha.

What many the world over consider democracy is legally subversive in China for threatening the Communist Party-led system.

In the past month, authorities have arrested and convicted Xu, Qin, and Wang and detained or



Chinese dissident Zha Jianguo (AP)

interrogated at least 29 other party members. Police took Zha from his home Sunday afternoon and held him for nearly 24 hours to keep him from Xu's trial.

Labor rights campaigner Zhang Shuangui will be put on trial Sunday for — like Xu, Qin and Wang — endangering state security, the Hong Kong-based Information Center of Human Rights and Democratic Movement reported today. Zhang tried to organize an unemployed workers group.

Until the crackdown, the China Democracy Party distinguished itself from past attempts at opposition by its openness. Organizers publicly announced their intention to set up the party. They tried to register with authorities. Statements were faxed to foreign media and human rights groups to circumvent China's state-controlled media.

The party never managed to establish a nationwide organization or leadership. Its separate branches in at least 11 provinces and cities, by Zha's count, were only loosely affiliated. He does not know how many members there are, but guesses about 500.

Now, the democracy campaigners are being driven underground.

Party members will concentrate on increasing ranks and will be more guarded in the use of telephones and faxes and their occasional meetings, Zha said.

The arrests of Xu, Wang and Qin deprive the party of its more influ-

ential members. All had proven track records. Xu and Qin as dissident editors in the Democracy Wall era movement 20 years ago. Wang as a student leader of the Tiananmen Square democracy demonstrations in 1989.

Zha got interested in politics as a radical youth, following Mao Tse-tung's appeals to go to the countryside in 1968. When he returned to Beijing in 1989, he marched in the Tiananmen protests and continued his activism.

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WORLD

in brief

Erez to avoid feuds in Turkish gov't talks

ANKARA (Reuters) — Turkish Prime Minister-designate Yalim Erez said yesterday he would try to steer clear of political feuds in his attempt to form a new government from a fragmented parliament.

Erez, an independent member of Parliament and former trade and industry minister, was appointed Wednesday to form an administration and pledged to end three weeks of political uncertainty.

He now faces tough bargaining with a handful of party chiefs split by deep personal animosity. Party leaders have failed to agree on a coalition since the collapse of conservative Mesut Yilmaz's government over corruption charges last month.

Ambush kills eight soldiers in Algeria

ALGIERS (AP) — Moslem militants ambushed an army patrol in a mountainous region west of Algiers, killing eight soldiers, wounding 15, and fleeing with a cache of weapons, independent newspapers reported yesterday.

The attack came during the holy month of Ramadan, when militant activity usually intensifies.

It is part of a nearly seven-year-old insurgency that has left 75,000 people dead. The insurgency began after the military-backed government scrapped a 1992 parliamentary runoff the Islamic Salvation Front was expected to win.

Cold destroys California's citrus industry

SANTA PAULA, California (AP) — Three straight nights of freezing temperatures have caused at least \$591 million in damage to California's citrus industry.

Supermarket prices for oranges could triple in the next few days, wholesalers said.

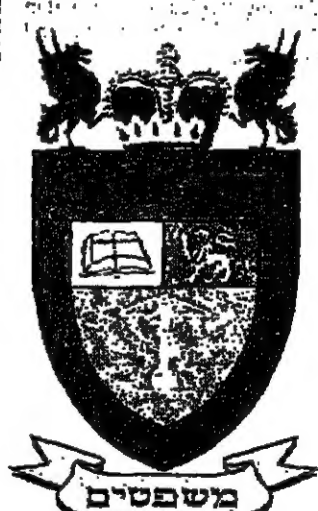
While farmers scrambled to save their crops, the cold air that has spilled out of Canada spread a deadly sheet of ice from Texas through the Tennessee Valley.

"Based on preliminary damage surveys, our growers will be lucky to salvage more than 15 percent of the county's citrus crop," said Leonard Craft, Tulare County's agricultural commissioner.

Ukrainian candy named after Monica Lewinsky

KIEV, Ukraine (AP) — President Bill Clinton sent a letter of praise a few years back to a Ukrainian candy factory after tasting its sweets. But here's one he probably won't have a taste for. The factory in Khmelnytsky, about 300 kms southwest of the capital of Kiev, yesterday named its newest chocolate confection after Monica Lewinsky, a local newspaper reported.

The candy is dedicated to a "sad story of love between Bill and Monica," the chocolate's designer, Oksana Kaduk said. The plant is hoping its Monica chocolates will find a huge market. Its Israeli partner has already ordered a large batch, the paper went on to say.



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Seizing the center

Politically speaking, Lt.-Gen. (res.) Amnon Lipkin-Shahak is doubly blessed. As a top military figure, he automatically exudes a form of leadership that is above politics. Though Israel is thought of as particularly prone to the admixture of military and political leadership, the popular attraction to Shahak recalls the American tradition of George Washington, Ulysses Grant, or Dwight Eisenhower. In addition, Shahak has a form of charisma that contributed to his charmed military career, and may be even more useful as he enters the dangerous waters of politics.

Shahak has twice received the Medal of Valor, Israel's highest military honor, for bravery in battle and is among those officers who have developed a loyal following among the many who have served under him over the years. At the same time, Shahak has made his share of enemies on his way to the top. What his critics call cynicism and disloyalty, his supporters regard as an ability to separate friendship from professional judgment. Yet it is difficult to find anyone who can point to a significant mark left by Shahak after nearly four years as chief of staff, for better or for worse.

As Shahak shifts over to the political realm, this tendency to be a competent steward rather than a policy reformer could be both a hindrance and an asset. On the one hand, the public may well be in the mood - after Netanyahu's ideologically charged style - for calm competence. On the other, simple stewardship will not be enough to push through the politically tough decisions and reforms necessary in the times ahead.

The lack of a reformer's penchant for initiative during his military years, for example, may not augur well for Shahak as a political leader. Even before he became chief of General Staff, the adaptation of the IDF to changing strategic threats, the challenge of becoming "smaller and smarter," and the restructuring of the reserve system were all overdue. Perhaps it is true that such changes must ultimately come from above, rather than within, but Shahak showed little inclination to initiate major reforms.

If anything, the acumen that Shahak is now demonstrating is more of a political than military nature. In an interview this week in Ha'aretz, he made a possibly astute political judgment: the Labor-Meretz combination has branded itself too far to the Left to be elected by the public, while a large element of the Right is ready to negotiate peace agreements and is willing to pay the price for them. In other words, creating a force that combines the moderate Left and Right is both the way to win an election and the key to governing successfully. Accordingly, Shahak has reportedly decided to join forces with Dan Meridor, despite the withering criticism from Labor and Meretz that

he is splitting the Left and reducing the chances that Netanyahu will be replaced.

At this stage, political calculations are still based on shifting ground, and much can happen between now and election day. But it is not too early to start applying some of the few principles that Shahak himself put forth on his first day as a civilian. Shahak, for example, said it is important not to get caught up in battles over ego that detract from the objective of "change," his euphemism for unseating Netanyahu. Yet it is clear that Shahak sees himself as heading a centrist party, rather than Dan Meridor. At the moment, before his real entrance into politics, the polls indicate that Shahak is the more attractive candidate. The real test will come, however, if Shahak will be able to apply his own logic if it indicates that Meridor should lead the party.

Those seeking to displace the Netanyahu government tend to be focused on who has the best shot of doing so at the polls. But it is also worth considering the pros and cons of backing a politically untested candidate, regardless of how lofty his popularity is at the beginning of the race.

The record of generals going directly into politics is a mixed one. Yitzhak Rabin did not have extensive political experience before his first term as prime minister, which ended in his resignation. Ehud Barak was considered a great electoral asset for the Labor Party, and remained popular when he served as a minister under Rabin and Peres, but his star quickly tarnished after he assumed the leadership of the party in opposition. Yitzhak Mordechai has made a successful transition from military to civilian political life, and remains the Likud's most popular minister. Shahak would be the first general to shoot for the top spot directly, without serving in any other political post.

Even Netanyahu himself, considered the consummate politician, had little executive experience before taking office. He had never even been a minister, and the sense that he was going through on-the-job training was palpable throughout his first year or so in office. Meridor, by contrast, has held senior posts under four prime ministers: cabinet secretary under Begin, justice minister under Peres and Shamir, and finance minister under Netanyahu.

Regardless of who ultimately leads the centrist party ticket, Shahak is right in stating that a combination of leaders from both sides of the center can make the greatest contribution to bringing the country together. As he said yesterday upon leaving the IDF after 36 years' service, "The separation among us is bad for everyone... I believe in a new way which will bring together as many parts of society as possible and give hope to all those who feel they need it, as I do."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PA PROPAGANDIST

Sir, - Jerusalem Post columnist Daoud Kuttab writes like a propagandist for the Palestinian Authority. His transparent aim is to demonize Israel while projecting an image of persecuted Arabs in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, in the hope of building sympathy for the creation of an Arab state.

The result has been a series of articles, which often contain distortions, omissions and falsifications.

Take, for example, Kuttab's September 24 effort. Describing the results of the UN partition of western Palestine in 1947, he recalls that only the Jewish state was created.

Surely, no lapse of memory caused Kuttab not to inform his readers that the Arab state failed

to come into existence because the Palestinian Arabs not only rejected the UN compromise but attacked the Jews. As this fact would not enhance the propagandist's position on Arab statehood, better to just leave it out.

Kuttab's attempt at deception reached a new low in his November 26 column.

The demand to "Let my people go," first heard in the biblical story of freedom for an enslaved people, became a slogan for the Soviet Jewry movement. By appropriating this cry for the oppressed for the title of a column dedicated to the release of Arab terrorists from Israeli prisons, Kuttab equates those who indiscriminately murder and maim with the victims of slavery and Soviet persecution.

HAREDIM: SHARE THE BURDEN

Sir, - Jonathan Rosenblum (Dec. 14) refers to haredi parents "guarding their children's souls" like a Ming vase for 18 years, "going on to whine that they cannot be expected to expose them at the most vulnerable age in their lives to an environment of casual sexual mixing and standards of modesty so at odds with their own."

Mr. Rosenblum, who gave you the right to demand special treatment for your 18-year-old son and the thousands of his fellow yeshiva students who avoid their national duty? Does it not occur to you that we all try our best to guard our children's souls and we

all share a sense of trepidation when they go off to serve their country?

All we are asking is that the responsibility for the welfare of this country be shared equally by all its Jewish citizens and maybe, someday, by its non-Jewish citizens too.

You see, Mr. Rosenblum, we do not buy your argument that this country needs thousands of young men to "protect" it by studying Torah full-time until they are too old to serve in the army.

We also refuse to accept the fact that an inevitable result of this anomaly is that so many of

Kuttab does not see it that way. For him, the vile practitioners of the abomination of terrorism, whose declared "military" targets include school children, infants and mothers, are "proud fighters," (December 10) "guerrillas" and "freedom fighters" (November 26). This despicable commentary calls into question the man's discernment, sense of morality or his honesty.

Kuttab's propaganda, which would not be out of place in a PA-sponsored newspaper, does seem inappropriate on the editorial page of *The Jerusalem Post*.

BERNARD SMITH,
The Jerusalem Institute of Western Defense
Jerusalem.

these men go on to become economic parasites, living off the earnings of their wives and the hand-outs of a corrupt political system.

Let us all rejoice at the recent High Court decision, and let us pray that our legislators will have the good sense to draw up a viable set of regulations, which will take into account the special needs of haredi Jews, whilst assuring that the heavy burden of national service will be shared in a more equitable manner than has been the case hitherto.

ASHER CAILINGOLD
Jerusalem.

FROM OUR ARCHIVES

63 years ago: On December 25, 1933, *The Palestine Post* reported that the Arab Executive had decided to call another general strike and demonstration on January 16, 1934, and was inciting the public to support this protest against land sales and

Jewish immigration. The Executive had also paid fines of Arabs sentenced for their recent rioting and illegal demonstrations.

25 years ago: On December 25, 1973, *The Jerusalem Post* report-

ed from Geneva that the Israel-Egyptian military disengagement talks had revived the scheme for the reopening of the Suez Canal and that Egypt had agreed to seek an overall solution of the Middle East conflict.

Alexander Zvielli

MEIR RONNEN © 98



Patriots, Scuds and Katyushas

MOSHE ZAK

The inhabitants of Kiryat Shmona and other Galilee settlements received advance warning on Tuesday of the Katyushas that the Hizbullah was about to fire. They were requested to go into their shelters hours before they landed. However, the inhabitants of Tel Aviv and Ramat Gan weren't told to get into shelters or to crowd into sealed rooms when there was concern that Saddam Hussein was liable to fire Scuds from his homes as an act of desperation.

The government knew in advance of the US plans for Desert Fox. President Bill Clinton had briefed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during his visit. Even earlier, the Americans had notified Ambassador Zalman Shoval of their intention to send Patriot batteries manned by Americans to Israel. The missile unit arrived a week before Clinton, and Washington tried to camouflage the delivery under the guise of an American maneuver in the Negev. Nevertheless, Israeli intelligence estimated the danger of Scuds being fired at Israel as "minimal."

Eight years ago, before Desert Storm, Israel wanted to buy Patriot missiles from the US, but the US was in no hurry to sell them. It made their stationing here conditional on their being manned by Americans. Moshe Arens, then defense minister, was opposed to the stationing of American soldiers here, and requested that the batteries be manned by Israelis.

But after the first Scuds hit Ramat Gan, Israel agreed to accept the Patriots with American teams, on condition that they be stationed here only temporarily and that we could later buy them and man them ourselves.

The Patriot didn't live up to

expectations: the results of its use were disappointing. It turned out to be a good anti-aircraft missile but no good against missiles. It didn't shoot down any Scuds and in one or two cases even caused damage within Israel.

Before returning to America, the commander of the unit, Col. David

mission of inquiry to check on a list of citizens that had visited the American batteries including members of Jewish delegations that had come from the US to show solidarity with Israel during the crisis, and were photographed at the American batteries. This time the administration won't

Israel needs American tools and not American boys in deterring missiles and rockets from distance

Hibner, admitted that the Israelis had rapidly learned how to handle the Patriot, and had even suggested various improvements that were adopted by the Americans commanding the Patriot batteries in Saudi Arabia. These improvements and others are included in the upgraded model of the Patriot bought by Israel.

But when the Americans began to plan Operation Desert Fox, they suggested on their own that Patriot batteries be sent here. We have no unambiguous proof, but it's more than likely the US used this as a demonstration of good will toward Israel during the post-Wye period. And Israel welcomed the gesture without stopping to consider its long-range implications.

WE MAY hope that this time we won't have to put up with the insults of 1991 when, after the failure of the Patriots, their manufacturers, supported by the Department of Defense, accused Israel of passing secret information about them to China. The administration even sent a com-

have to apologize for their false accusations, because this time the shipment of Patriots missiles was an American initiative.

The American operation only lasted a few days, but we can assess its diplomatic significance. The American soldiers emphasized to the Arab countries that the US will help Israel defend itself against aggression by Iraq or any other country. In the face of rearmament by Iraq, Iran, and other countries in the region with weapons of mass destruction and long-range missiles, the US removed any doubt that it would stand by Israel. Whatever the practical benefit of the Patriots, they serve as a deterrent to our enemies.

But on the other hand, the pictures of the American teams in charge of the batteries near Tel Aviv unintentionally erode Israel's diplomatic position in the face of demands for concessions, and the degree of the American public's support against these demands.

Israel has always carefully

avoided the involvement of American soldiers in its defense. We have always said: "Give us the tools and we'll finish the job on our own." The American people always respected this stance. And when Israel agreed to the temporary stationing of American soldiers in Tel Aviv during Desert Storm, secretary of state James Baker exploited this to boast to Israel, "Our boys are fighting for you against Iraq, and you are coming to me to ask for compensation for the damage caused in the war."

Baker later apologized for this remark, but there was no shortage of statements by American generals trying to describe the war as intended to defend Israel. More serious was the influence on the Israeli public, which inferred from the presence of American soldiers that the IDF was unable to face its enemies alone. This was a blow to morale.

It's true that the European members of NATO have agreed to an extensive presence of the US Army on their soil, but the US doesn't suggest to them where they should draw their borders, and doesn't mediate between them and their neighbors. For Israel to freely debate a diplomatic settlement with its neighbors it mustn't appear to its own citizens as a client state, dependent on the US Army. We are an ally assisted by generous US aid, but need no American need to fight for us.

The Scuds from Iraq were not fired, and the Patriot batteries weren't activated this time. Instead, Katyushas hit northern Israel. The Patriot missiles aren't for Katyusha rockets and thus we must certainly have to deal with them alone.

A bizarre situation

MARK A. HELLER

The minute it became clear that a Lebanese mother and six of her children had been killed by a stray Israel Air Force bomb, the media began trotting out experts to explain how this kind of tragedy, which the sterile language of military analysis terms "collateral damage," is unavoidable in a situation of ongoing combat. That's not much comfort to the Lebanese victims or their families.

It would be slightly more consoling to those Israelis with a troubled conscience - and the word can still be used, even by those who do care about Israeli security - if they were truly convinced that the situation in Lebanon is unavoidable. But the sequence of events quickly exposed the absurdity of this argument.

Almost immediately after the IDF admitted and apologized for its mistake, Hizbullah unleashed a huge volley of Katyusha rockets against northern Galilee. Amid all the reports of physical damage and psychological disruption and threats and counter-threats, the meaning of this event somehow escaped most people's attention. It is this: After 13 years of presence in the security zone, two large-scale military operations, and hundreds of Israeli dead and wounded (in addition to countless Lebanese), Hizbullah can still attack Israel, and specifically the northern Galilee, any time it feels

the desire or need to do so. In fact, it rarely does so, but when it does, it is almost always in response to some Israeli military action. This leads to a conclusion that is bizarre: only because the situation is bizarre: Israel's presence in southern Lebanon not only does

Our presence in southern Lebanon not only does not protect the residents of the North, it actually endangers them

not protect the residents of the North, it actually endangers them. The reason is that the IDF, in order to protect itself against Hizbullah attacks, is obliged to undertake actions with results, intentional or otherwise, that stimulate the Hizbullah actions that send the residents of Kiryat Shmona and Nahariya scurrying, first to the shelters (if not further south), and then to the psychologists.

Well, concede the experts, perhaps the security zone doesn't actually prevent the attacks on Israel that do take place, but it at least prevents the ones that don't, and without the security zone, the situation would be worse.

THIS KIND of argument is technically irrefutable, but it flies in

the face of elementary common sense. When Hizbullah refrains from attacking Israel proper, it does so not because it is unable to, but from a complex set of considerations, most of which have to do with its political agenda in Lebanon as protector of the

underprivileged and champion of the national resistance to Israeli occupation. Gratuitous attacks against Israel invite retaliation that would not serve this agenda.

In other words, Hizbullah, to the extent that it has any motivation to attack Israel, is sometimes deterred from acting on that motivation.

But the threats behind this putative deterrence have absolutely nothing to do with the IDF's presence in southern Lebanon: they have everything to do with long-range firepower and airpower that already operate from behind the international border and could continue to do so after a withdrawal, even if Hizbullah were serious about its declarations of intent to liberate Jerusalem and the rest of "occupied Palestine."

Of course, there are those who argue that Hizbullah (or the Lebanese government, or Syria) could be deterred even now from attacking the IDF in the security zone, if only Israel took off the gloves and finally got serious, not as in Operation Accountability or Operation Grapes of Wrath, but really serious. Perhaps they have some original ideas that haven't been tried before (expanding the security zone, expelling the population, bombing Lebanon longer than the US could bomb Iraq?), but without more persuasive arguments, it is difficult to believe that people who talk as if Operation Peace for Galilee (or the intifada, or the War of Attrition) never happened truly have more promising options. And without such options, what's left is withdrawal or more of the same.

Withdrawal implies a moral burden to arrange for the well-being of SLA members who might be put at risk. It also implies the need to acknowledge that a 13-year-old policy is bankrupt and no longer serves any useful purpose. The second challenge is more difficult. But unless it is met head on, Israeli soldiers will continue to die, Lebanese civilians will continue to be the victims of "collateral damage," and Israeli civilians will remain suspended between a normal life and the next Katyusha alert and mad rush for shelter.

That is the price of intellectual inertia - and it is far too high.

POSTSCRIPTS

G.I. (Blank): Believe it or not, the popular G.I. Joe doll is becoming a pregnant woman.

No joke. Hasbro recently sponsored an online auction in which the top bidder would receive a G.I. Joe custom-made in his or her likeness.

The winning bid - \$2,951 - came from a Maryland woman, Sherry Pluche, who is in the Navy. She told Hasbro the doll would make a "cool memento" for her unborn child.

A BRITISH researcher claims he can restore long-lost memories in the elderly by treating them with smells from World War II.

According to the *Week* magazine, when psychiatrist John Kinge recreated the aromas of wartime - including bombed-out buildings

and the scent of a Royal Women's Auxiliary Service tea wagon - the odors triggered a burst of memories in patients in their 80s and 90s.

One man suddenly recited his old rifle number after whiffing a scent called "hospital." But Kinge isn't sure the method will work on future generations.

"Food is cooked in the microwave," he said. "We live in such a sterile environment, there are virtually no smells to remember us by."

LANGUAGE BARRIER Bureau: To paraphrase Steve Martin, "It's like those British have a different word for everything."

Just compare the reactions to a recent launch of a US Tomahawk

missile by a British submarine. Representing the English, Adm. Sir Michael Boyce, first sea lord and chief of staff of the Royal Navy, said: "Good show, very vivid."

The quote from the American missile test chief, Lt. Cmdr. Len Hamilton, was: "Totally awesome!"

THE LIBRARY of Congress spends more than \$60,000 each year to print a Braille version of Playboy magazine that is read by fewer than 1,000 blind people.

BEST SUPERMARKET Tabloid Headline: "2.2 Million Will Lose Their Jobs This Year - For Acting Stupid at Office Christmas Parties!" (Weekly World News)

WE ARE ALWAYS concerned about our readers' well-being, which is why we wanted to pass along this urgent health bulletin from Duke University: "Do not swallow pennies made after 1982!" According to Dr. Sara O'Hara, a pediatric radiologist at the school, coins minted after 1982 contain lots of zinc, which can react with stomach acid to cause ulcers, anemia and kidney damage.

Don't you think there should be warning labels on all new pennies?

AN ICE CREAM parlor in Tucson, Ariz., has begun selling a laxative ice cream called "Gentle Persuasion." The concoction contains oatmeal and coarsely chopped prunes. (LA Times)

50 من الامم

Boom time for amulets

MICHAEL MARMUR

It's election time, and the amulet industry is moving into full swing. Many political parties will be issuing them wholesale in the coming months to encourage citizens to vote the way God intended. All over the country, extra staff is being employed to meet the expected upsurge in imprecations and incantations.

Judging from precedent, some parties will benefit from the services of sages assuring that a well-placed vote guarantees eternal life. Officials responsible for reservations in the Garden of Eden report a boom for this coming springtime, although it is by no means clear that all who are pencilled in for a group booking actually reach the destination as promised.

There seems little doubt that the coming election will be the most superstitious and least religious in Israel's history. Politicians with a

didates offering long life, good health, powers of virility or fertility (or both), eternal salvation, or even just a weekend in Tiberias if you promise to vote for them.

I suggest a well-respected Jewish expert in the field be called in to moderate — perhaps David Copperfield the magician, or maybe Uri Geller. If Geller comes, I might get my broken clock fixed at the same time. Each candidate should be given five full minutes in order to demonstrate that the gates of heaven open when their particular voting card is selected.

Mysticism, said Cardinal John Newman, begins in mist and ends in schism. The truth is that the Jewish mystical tradition is profound and rich, and deserves our awe and respect. But those who speak in its name and become linked to one political party or another do indeed spread mist and schism in equal parts.

I do not seek to remove religion from politics, but rather to find a worthy place for it, far away from partisan horse-trading

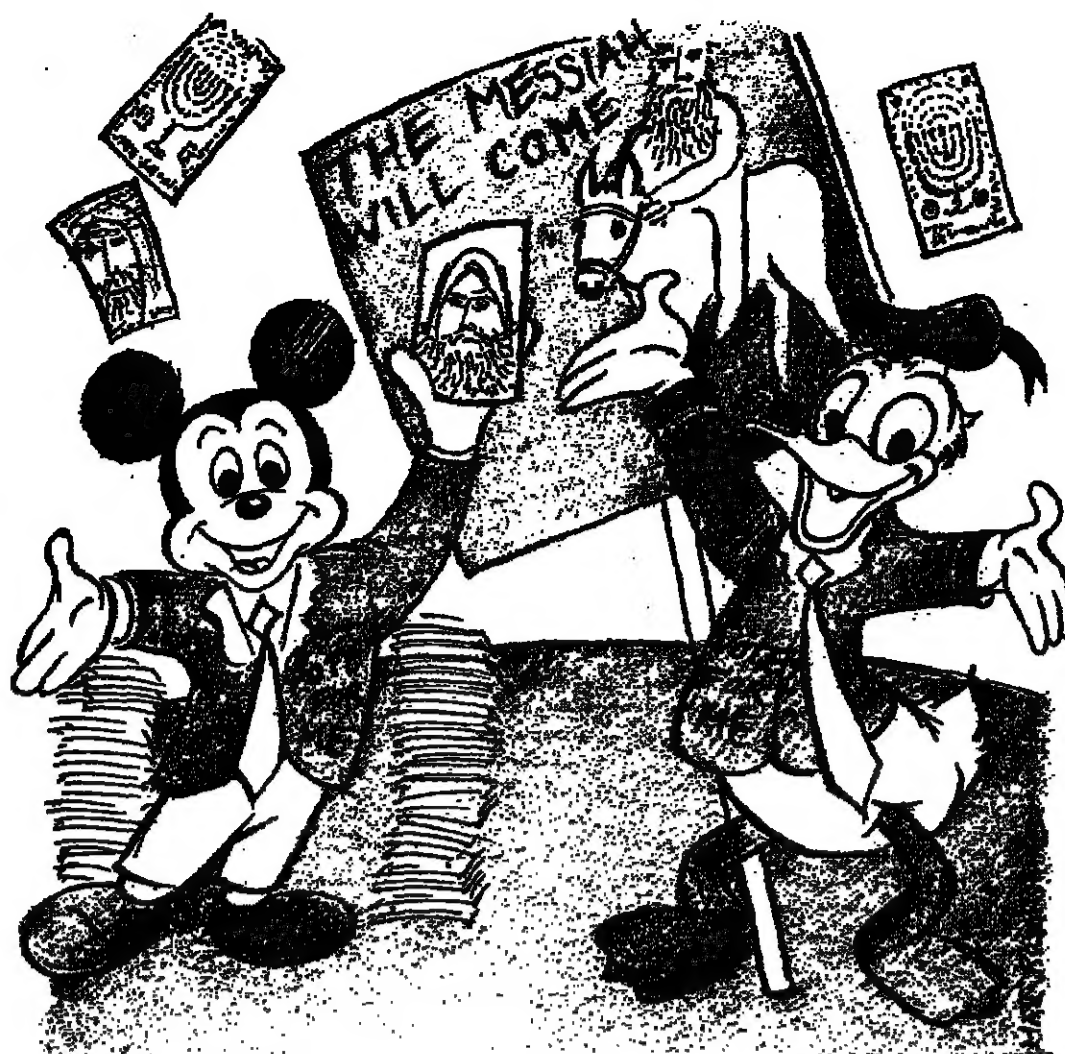
taste for lobster will carp on Jewish themes; others, having grown tired of promising the world, will promise the world to come. Public figures will make of tradition a rule, on whose back they will load every self-interest and internecine spite. Rich ethnic heritage will serve as battle dress in the usual cold-exchange of slogans and calumnies.

Readers unacquainted with contemporary Israeli political culture may find it hard to believe that a nation which gave the world Isaiah and Isaiah Berlin, Karl Marx and Leo Strauss, Leon Blum and Benjamin Disraeli, will this year most likely play host to a political debate on the level of Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse.

My own modest proposal is that alongside the inevitable prime ministerial televised debate, we hold a miracle spell-off among those can-

I AM NOT suggesting that we ban the misuse of Jewish religion and culture in the upcoming elections, nor that we legislate against charlatans and hucksters. But it behooves us to expose the phenomenon, mock it a little, and then argue vigorously against it at every opportunity. Each citizen of this country should cast his or her vote for that party which best approximates his or her own vision of how Israeli society should look in this world, and at this time. Those who replace sociology with eschatology damage our democracy, and they do little to honor the great traditions of religious thought and practice.

I am a Reform Jew, and as such the object of scorn and vilification by many of my fellow Jews in this country. In the last election campaign, one party even dedicated air time to Reform-bashing, apparently in the belief that this is almost as



efficacious as holy water and collectible laminated cards of sages as a means of bringing out voters.

There are many strong reasons to vote for parties which represent world views far removed from my own. I have no argument with a voter who in good conscience casts a vote for a party representing opinions I do not share. Let them be persuaded by argument and by charisma, let them hear about education and economic policy. Oslo and Wye, Sabbath observance and special funding of religious institutions, unemployment and missile deployment.

All of this is fair and legitimate. But until the Holy One, blessed be He, makes an official statement of voting preference, why speak on His behalf?

Until the Torah yields the secret of electoral bliss, why

pretend it does? And until the messiah appears on a donkey bearing the insignia of one party or another, why should we preempt the great day?

Undoubtedly, the politics of divine endorsement are effective. Those who make use of these tactics do well at the polls, which they interpret, no doubt, as ultimate proof of the rightness of their cause. The major victim of this kind of behavior is the tradition whose name is invoked by the perpetrators.

The call to remove religion from political discourse is disingenuous and impossible by definition. I, for one, do not seek to remove religion from politics, but rather to find a worthy place for it, far away from partisan horse-trading.

I, for one, need Judaism this week to help me confront the horror of a mother and six of her children

killed inadvertently in Lebanon, and the terror of houses destroyed and lives threatened deliberately in Upper Galilee. I need Judaism to help consider the difference between real national unity and its corrupted expressions.

All the indications are that those who promise everything in the name of Judaism will do better in the coming months than those who respect Judaism too much to transform it into a gimmick. So rather than trying to beat my opponents, I will join them in assuring you that anyone who votes in the upcoming elections through conviction rather than inquisition will live long, win the lottery, avoid all dental troubles, and represent Israel in the Eurovision Song Contest.

I may be wrong, but we'll only know that after the elections. So what do I care?

Netanyahu's bleak record

GERALD M. STEINBERG

OUTSIDE Israel's borders, the expectations for progress were minimal, given the Egyptian policy of "cold peace." However, Netanyahu had a Jordanian option, and a series of highly publicized visits to Jordan during the election campaign helped

Many Israelis who supported him last time will conclude that he has failed

to create an image (if not the substance) of pragmatism.

Yet, his lack of subtlety, in contrast to the Hashemite leaders, and incidents such as the failed assassination attempt against Hamas leader Khaled Masha'al in Amman, led the Jordanians to despair, to the point of preferring Ariel Sharon.

The immediate cost of inaction and the triumph of rhetoric over substance can be seen in the continuing tragedy in Lebanon. Although the government announced a number of initiatives to alter the stalemate and the war of attrition, nothing

has changed, either in the political or military arenas.

This week's violence serves to highlight the absence of real policies in this area as well.

Beyond the regional issues, the policies of the Netanyahu government, as well as its confrontational style, have alienated the US, including much of the American Jewish community.

The negative image of Israel in the media, the lack of consistency and goals, and the controversies over issues such as religious status have all undermined the vital links between Israel and the American Jewish community. If not reversed, the long-term costs of these tensions in terms of our strategic situation will be very high.

Indeed, for Israelis, Netanyahu's personal style, the confrontations, and most importantly, his inability to forge a team to deal with the critical problems are his most glaring weaknesses. Netanyahu's allies are few in number, and even smaller in stature. (The more competent appointees, such as former finance minister Yaakov Neeman, did not last long.)

Once in office, to be successful, a political leader must do more than criticize his predecessors and conspire against his (or her) enemies. A

prime minister is expected to present a clear vision and direction, and to pursue these goals consistently, even if this means saying no to some supporters.

If Netanyahu had challenged his critics on the Right, explaining why it was necessary to agree to further territorial withdrawals, and to delay construction in places such as Har Homa, to avoid a clash with the US, he might have earned their respect. Ironically, when the Land of Israel Front realized that Netanyahu was its best option, despite their disagreements, it was too late to reverse the momentum.

Netanyahu would also have suffered some short-term losses if he had faced down his hardline and religious supporters over the conversion bill and related topics, but he would have emerged with increased respect among many other groups.

In his reelection campaign, Netanyahu can be expected to repeat the slogans that succeeded in 1996, including the attacks on the secular Labor-Left establishment and on the failures of the Oslo process.

This time, however, such slogans will not be sufficient. Netanyahu has had almost three years to develop alternatives, and many Israelis who supported him last time will conclude that he has failed.

Yossi Sarid, hypocrite

JONATHAN ROSENBLUM

were not unfounded and that "many of the images of haredim found in the secular press are drawn from classical antisemitic sources, including the Nazis."

Fantasies of violence against haredim abound. Not just anonymous wall posters in Kfar Sava proclaiming, "Exterminate the haredim

The great champion of 'free speech' and 'artistic expression' is rather selective about which speech and speakers should be protected

at birth," in response to the opening of a religious kindergarten, but articles by leading journalists and academics in the mainstream media.

"We have to storm Mea She'arim with machine guns and mow them down," recommends left-wing darling Uri Avneri. "I would take all those weird people from Shas, Aguda, and Degel Hatorah and tie all their beards together and light a match," says Popolitika's Amnon Danker.

Yonatan Gefen announces his willingness to cast the first stone in the intifada against haredim, and

Prof. Uzi Aron tells a *Kol Ha'Ir* interviewer, "Haredim should be suspended on an electricity pole."

YOSHI SARID regularly hurls the term "inciter" like a thunderbolt at his enemies, lectures us that words kill, and accuses the entire Right of complicity in the murder of Yitzhak Rabin. Surely, then, he forcefully decried these examples of respected public figures savoring the thought of waging war on haredim. Perhaps, but we must not have heard the news that day.

Haredim are dehumanized every day, portrayed as an undifferentiated mass of black. In Josef Goebbels' propaganda films images of haredim dissolved into images of running rats, and today, in Israel, haredim are once again portrayed as subhuman beasts, breeding like insects. They are "black ants," "bumming locusts," "crass baboons," "backward barbarians," "forces of darkness."

Once Jews were accused of killing Christian children and drinking their blood. And today "bloodsucker" is a favored term for haredim. In place of body-snatchers, Ha'aretz's Yoel Marcus accuses them of being "soul-snatchers" and Gideon Samet calls the *ba'al teshuva* movement the "most disgusting phenomenon of our time."

Hitler, in 1943, explained to Hungarian head of state Adm. Miklos Horthy that the Jews had to be destroyed because they are like

viruses that spread contagious diseases and destroy the body's immunological system. And *Kol Ha'Ir* solemnly interviews an "expert on contagious diseases" to explain how haredim spread and threaten all around them. "Parasite" has become used so frequently in connection with haredim that the two terms have become virtually synonymous.

Some have even found in the haredim retrospective understanding for the Nazis. "When I see the haredim surrounded by their large families, I understand the Nazis," wrote sculptor Yigal Tumarkin — a statement that did not prevent him from being honored by Yad Vashem. And Tommy Lapid sees the haredim as having usurped the traditional Jewish role of "taking advantage of the gentile, trading in his blood, and laughing at him," only this time with the secular public in the role of the gentile.

One wonders whether he also sees the secular public in the traditional gentile role of "avenger" of these outrages.

If Sarid and company had not been so eager to seize upon Eichler's column as an opportunity to score more points against a prominent haredi spokesman, they might have seen it for what it was — a desperate plea to take note of the direction we are headed and how far we have already gone. But that would have required taking a long look in some north Tel Aviv mirrors.

Middle Israel

AMOTZ ASA-EL

The Betar Index

Admiring Bill Clinton's embrace of Ehud Barak, swallowing Ha'aretz's most recent Netanyahu eulogy, or gulping pollster Mina Tzema's latest study of flower collectors' political leanings can all be interesting, telling and even mind-boggling, but in terms of detecting Bibi's electoral prospects they are useless.

Last Saturday, when the rest of the official, unofficial, and semi-official prime ministerial candidates were at the drawing boards searching for election strategies, tactics, and partners, Bibi lost no time and went to Jerusalem's Teddy Stadium.

As he lit the seventh Hanukkah candle at half time — characteristically causing a delay in the second half's start — the hero of the Bar-On affair, Levy scandal, Masbaleh debacle, Wye sellout, and the Likud's dismemberment got a deafening ovation from 15,000 sweating Betar fans. Judging by the Betar Index, Bibi is clearly alive, well, and kicking.

Four days later, Bibi showed up in shrapnel-pocked, working-class Kiryat Shmona, where, back in '96, then premier Shimon Peres, under very similar circumstances, avoided going into the streets.

But Bibi is no Peres: for him, any combination of ballots and bullets is a win-win situation, by the very same token that for anyone left of the Likud it is a hopeless non-starter. Never mind, then, that Bibi's record on Lebanon is identical to his predecessors'; the locals greeted him with a kind of derelictiousness ordinarily saved for Rabbi Yitzhak Kadourie and the messiah.

What all this means, then, is three things:

• Bibi's grassroots support makes his political odds preposterous.

• While habitually angering Middle Israelis in a variety of ways, he somehow wins the support of their low-brow neighbors.

• As the candidate pack coalesces, the struggle boils down to a host of socially aloof elitists taking on a politically isolated champion of the disenfranchised.

To be sure, what often attracts the working class to Bibi is an inferiority complex and a fascination with belligerent rhetoric. Once those are addressed, all the rest is forgiven.

Never mind that behind such catchy slogans as "the Palestinian Authority will get as much as it gives" lurks a land-for-peace policy hardly distinguishable from Barak's.

If you're a Betar fan, you have no problem with Bibi having tried to place the attorney-general's heavy robe on the slim shoulders of a little-known party hack: Roni Bar-On, a central Betar Jerusalem member, is one of ours. The media demonized him because he isn't one of theirs.

Just what that attorney-whatever thing is actually about doesn't really matter; if Bibi thought Roni was right for it, he must have known why.

If you're a Betar fan, you also forgive Bibi for failing to decisively smack, disgrace, and divorce a pompous ass like David Levy. He may have strayed a bit, but he is, at the end of the day, one of ours.

If you're a Betar fan, you also have no problem with Bibi sending Mossadniks to kill people in Jordan. We all want all terrorists dead, and all the rest is corollary.

If you're a Betar fan, you certainly don't mind the Wye deal.

For one thing, neither you nor your friends live in Hebron, and the closest you ever came to Jericho's ancient synagogue was when you last went gambling in Arafat's casino. Besides, doing business with the Arabs is OK; Begin also did that. The difference is that Barak, Shabak, Milo, Meridor, and the rest of those rich, well born, sophisticated dudes give them land willingly; Bibi, though he ends up doing the very

same thing, does it grudgingly.

And if you're a Betar fan reading all the headlines about the Likud decomposing under Bibi's tutelage, you tell yourself: I don't get it, the Likud is Bibi and me, and we're both happy, particularly with each other. Yes, all those journalists, pundits, and traitors who are shedding crocodile tears over our passing. But I am here, Bibi is here, Sara is here, this whole damn stadium is here, and as long as we stick around, so does the Likud — right, wrong, good or bad.

WHY MERIDOR, Shabak, Barak, and even super-hawks Limor Livnat, Benny Begin, or Uzi Landau are lumped together by Betar fans as anti-Christians is also clear: Not one of them is an emotional-blackmailer, and they all challenge Bibi's authority, while lacking his ability to conceal his own upscale origins.

In fact, Bibi grew up in well-to-do Rehavia, where he went to the same snobby school (the Gymnasia) as Dan Meridor, then went to the same elite IDF unit (Sayaret Matkal) as Shabak and Barak, and then studied at the same MIT where Uzi Landau became an engineer.

Apparently, Bibi is shrewdly following a pattern set in the 1950s by Argentina's Juan Peron. That populist, whose rule was also checkered with court scandals, a controversial wife and clashes with the elite, including the veteran military brass, sought to dialogue directly with a rapidly expanding urban working class — also in soccer stadiums — while sidelining the traditional elites.

Surely, if the powerful, affluent, and educated are bad guys, pinching them might not be too good for a while. The problems begin when the elites' only sin is their success and the working classes' only virtue is their disproportionate share of the losers' population. Making the lower classes a centerpiece of a political strategy can lead to electoral victory, but ultimately it tends to generate populism of the worst sort.

In Peron's case, his astronomical public-sector pay hikes resulted in legendary deficits and runaway inflation that nearly destroyed an essentially rich country's economy, and culminated in his successors' derelict invasion of British territory.

In the Likud's case, this scenario has already taken place once, when Menachem Begin backed supply-side economics while storming Lebanon.

Netanyahu, in his first two years in office, shunned this kind of populism, keeping the budget trimmed, the shekel solid, and the peace process running, albeit in first gear.

Now, however, there are alarming signs of retreat from that economically conservative inclination. Bibi's declared desire to raise next year's inflation target and his talk this week of launching a "partial" tax reform are such beginnings.

A higher inflation target means more public spending, which in turn is likely to translate into so-called election bribery. A partial tax reform means cutting wage-earners' taxes, but failing to abolish a host of tax exemptions elsewhere in the economy, so as to avoid clashing with assorted pressure groups. Sounds ideal, but someone is going to have to foot the bill eventually, and that will obviously be you and me, the morning after election day.

Unless of course a reelected Bibi chooses not only to expand the budget, but also to deepen the deficit. Fortunately, such a Peronist horror show is — for now — a remote possibility. And yet, combining the Betar Index with the effective dismissal of a conservative finance minister like Yaakov Neeman leaves us a lot closer to Peron's legacy today than we were last week.

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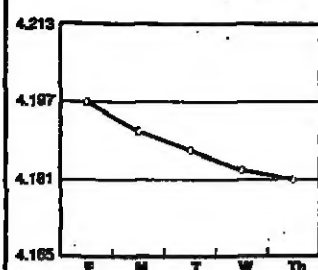
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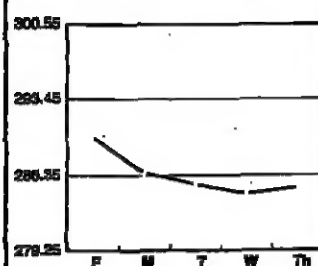
in brief

DOLLAR / SHEKEL

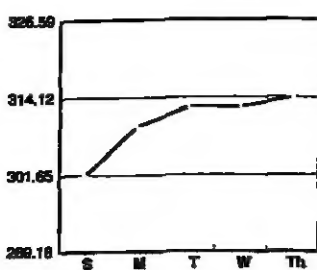


GOLD

\$ per ounce

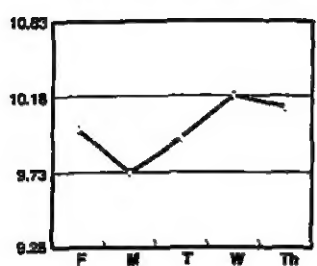


MAOF INDEX



OIL

\$ per barrel of Brent crude



November indicators index up 0.2%

The Bank of Israel's integrated index of economic indicators rose 0.2 percent in November, following an updated 0.2% increase in October, the central bank said yesterday. The index showed a 0.9% fall in retail chain store sales, compared to a 2.1% rise in October, while the imports index also fell 0.4%, after a 1.5% increase a month earlier. On the other hand, the industrial production component rose 1.4% in October, following a 0.5% reduction in September. This part of the index is always published one month later than the other elements.

David Zev Harris

Super-Sol to buy back shares

Retail chain Super-Sol yesterday said it intends to buy up to 5% of its outstanding shares traded on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange through a wholly-owned subsidiary. The chain said that such purchases will be made from time to time at the company's discretion, taking into consideration price and market conditions.

The announcement is the latest in series of similar declarations made by local companies, which consider current stock prices very attractive. Super-Sol's shares lost more than 20 percent since August as the economic slowdown affected the chain's profitability.

Dan Gerstenfeld

Frenkel: Now is not the time to alter targets

The best way to reduce unemployment is by working to increase economic growth, Bank of Israel Governor Jacob Frenkel said yesterday.

Speaking at a Histadrut conference, he said that to achieve these aims, there must be a sense of stability in the economy, which means "this is not the time to change targets." Frenkel said he was referring to the government budget deficit and inflation targets for 1999.

David Zev Harris

Jordan weavers protest Syrian competition

Jordanian weavers have written to the government to complain about the competition they are facing from Syrian and Southeast Asian goods, an official said yesterday.

In a protest letter to the Industry Ministry, the General Association of Owners of Weaving Industries requested government help in rectifying trade imbalances.

The association said Syrian products pose major competition to the kingdom's 1,000 weaving industries, which have a total capital of over 100 million Jordanian dinars and employ more than 30,000 workers, the letter said.

AP

Isuzu to cut 4,000 jobs

Japanese carmaker Isuzu Motors Ltd. announced yesterday it will slash 4,000 jobs and reduce interest-bearing debt as part of a restructuring drive to shore up profitability.

Isuzu, an affiliate of US-based General Motors Corp., said the plan will help it achieve its goal of 710 billion yen in domestic auto sales and a pretax profit of 10 billion yen in fiscal 2000.

AP

Treasury: Too many ministries dealing with foreign workers

By DAVID ZEV HARRIS

With five ministries dealing with the issue of foreign workers, minimal progress is being made in reducing their number, Treasury State Revenues Administration head Tsipi Galyam said yesterday.

"Despite, or maybe because, five government ministries are presently dealing with this issue, it seems that little progress is being made," Galyam told a Tel Aviv conference on unemployment. "Minimal, but it does exist."

Galyam was referring to the Interior Security, Interior, Justice, Labor and Social Affairs, and Finance ministries, explained her spokesman.

The man charged with coordination between all government ministries on the subject yesterday dis-

missed Galyam's claims. "If that's what she said, she simply not updated," said Ephraim Cohen, of the Labor and Social Affairs Ministry. "We've got one body that coordinates between all the ministries, principally the Internal Security Ministry, Employment Service, Interior Ministry and Foreign Ministry, the Justice Ministry and the Labor Ministry, with any other ministries participating if the issue has a bearing on their work."

The most recent Central Bureau of Statistics data pointed to 81,400 foreign workers, whose employment had been reported to the National Insurance Institute. This is the most accurate official estimate of legal foreign workers, with the assumption that the number of workers here without a permit is at least as large.

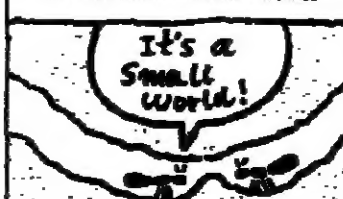
Cohen said the number of illegal foreign workers has been cut to some 90,000 during the last year, with 6,200 having been deported.

"We want that to increase to 1,000-2,000 a month next year," he said, adding that 700 workers were deported during November. The number of beds available in the holding enclosures ahead of deportation has recently been increased from 180 to 260, allowing for the speeding up of the process, Cohen added.

The Interior Ministry would not discuss the issue, saying the Labor Ministry is in overall charge and is the relevant body for all questions.

The Interior Security Ministry, meanwhile, said that it gives the matter appropriate importance through the operations of both the police and Prisons Service.

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Likud, Labor mull separate passage of defense budget

By DAVID ZEV HARRIS

Coalition and opposition MKs are exploring a separation of the defense budget from the remainder of the 1999 state budget, so as to ensure defense spending is not restricted — even if the rest of the budget is not approved — while the government functions as an interim cabinet.

"We think this is a good idea," Avraham Shohat (Labor) said, following a meeting of the committee.

The MKs spoke as Chief of General Staff Lt.-Gen. Shaul Mofaz and Defense Ministry Director-General Ilan Biran presented the defense budget to the Finance Committee.

Shohat said there is no problem for the opposition to back the coalition on this issue for a variety of reasons:

- The defense budget is entirely non-political and can therefore receive cross-Knesset support.

- If its budget is not approved, the ministry will only receive its 1998 allocation, split into equal monthly payments. That places any debt repayments, including those for arms procurement, at risk.

- The 1999 defense budget was to have included several changes on its 1998 composition. If it is not approved, these alterations cannot be implemented.

The defense budget, which is set to rise

NIS 2 billion from its present NIS 34.6, passed its first reading in the Knesset and is making its way through the committee stage.

However, the key budgetary arrangements bill, which details the budget, has so far failed to reach the first reading stage. On several occasions the government has attempted to introduce the bill — but given the ongoing political chaos has felt the legislation would be defeated.

Yesterday, however, coalition MKs on the Finance Committee were speaking far more positively about the budget and arrangements bills.

Committee Chairman Avraham Ravitz

(United Torah Judaism) and Zvi Hendel (National Religious Party) have spent the last 48 hours attempting to gain support for the legislation.

Hendel said he understands the budgetary arrangements bill will be introduced on Monday. "Having spoken to a variety of MKs, I reckon the coalition will succeed in passing the bill," he said.

In normal circumstances, both bills have their second and third readings on December 31. If this does not happen, then the country has to operate on the basis of the 1998 budget, with a variety of restrictions that the Treasury's budget department maintains will strangle the economy.

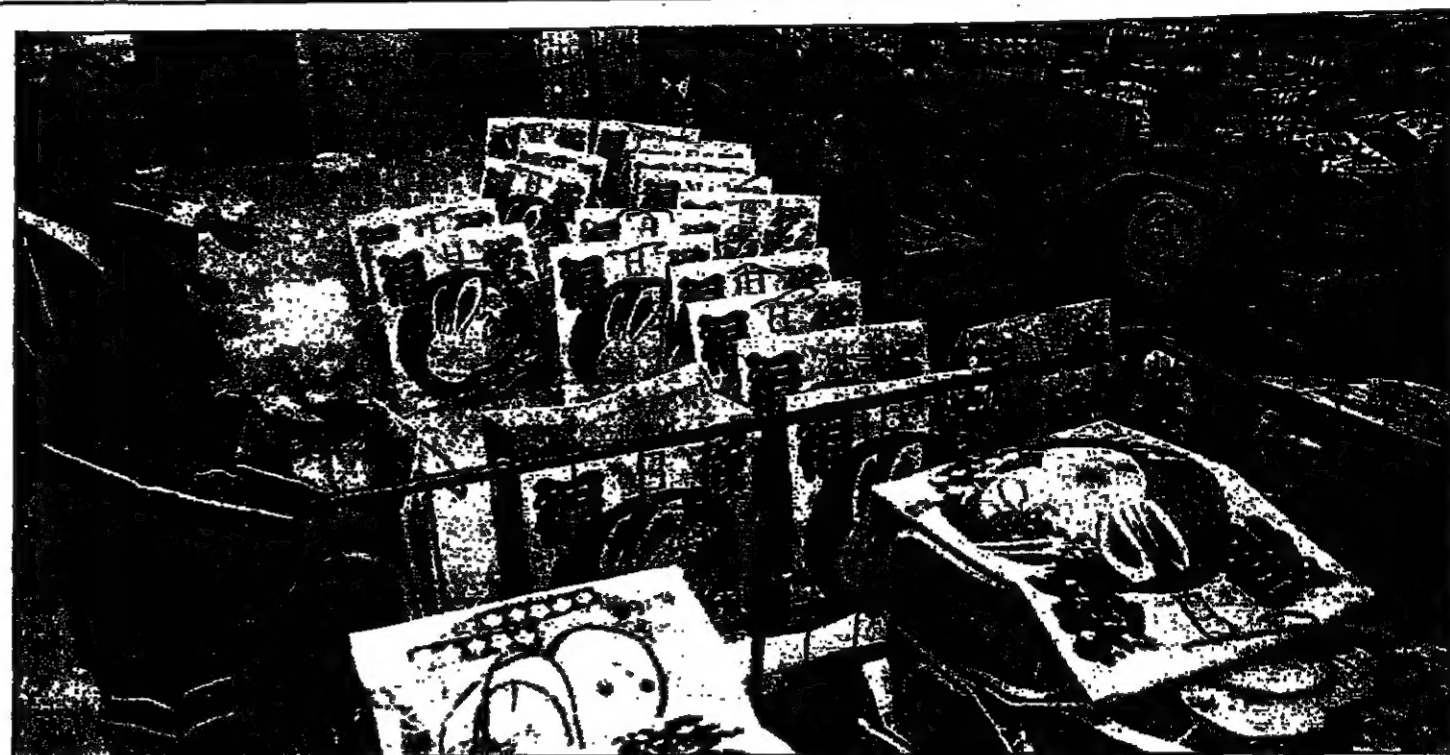
Russia passes budget

By NATALIA OLYNEC

Moscow (Bloomberg) — Russia's parliament approved in the first of four votes the 1999 state budget, which slashes spending while lowering taxes, after the government offered last-minute concessions to governors of the country's regions.

The parliament approved the budget by 303 votes to 65 with 9 abstentions after the government agreed to divide tax revenues evenly between federal and regional coffers. The parliament will decide on specific division of taxes when it debates the budget in the second reading in January.

"Not one task can be solved without the union of efforts of everyone working on the federal and regional levels," said Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov. "Revenues will be divided fifty-fifty. There can be no backtracking on that issue."



For a better year

Tokyo department store employees yesterday pack up "fuku bukuro," or "lucky bags," featuring the illustration of a rabbit, the animal of the coming Year of the Hare in the Chinese zodiac, for the store's first sales in 1999. Amid the worst recession in at least five decades, retailers throughout Japan are hoping these grab bags will jump start their sales in the new year.

(AP)

Bank Hapoalim report:

Weaker shekel to have mixed impact on 4th-qtr. earnings

By DAN GERSTENFELD

The shekel's depreciation last October will have mixed impact on fourth-quarter earnings reports, according to a report published by Bank Hapoalim.

The depreciation will have a positive affect on sales of export-oriented companies, as they receive more money when converting foreign currency into shekels and as they become more competitive.

Local manufacturers that compete in the domestic market with imported goods also stand to gain from the rise in price of imported products. At the same time, importers are expected to present lower profitability.

The bank economists note, however, that the effects of currency fluctuations are usually limited to the short term and in the long run

results reflect the business environment in which the firm operates and the management skills of the company's executives.

The companies that will be most affected by the decline of the shekel are those who borrowed money in foreign currency. These companies will present a sharp increase in financing costs unless they have also a foreign source of income which may compensate for the rise in borrowing costs.

According to the report, the sec-

tor which is expected to suffer from high exposure to foreign currency-linked loans is the housing industry. The report notes that although housing prices are dollar-denominated, the rise in prices did not reflect the whole depreciation.

The report also notes that at the end of 1997 total credit given to property companies by the five largest banks amounted to some NIS 55 billion, of which some 30% were in foreign currency. The amount further increased in the

first half of 1998 as many contractors expected the shekel to continue to strengthen. At the same time, sales rose sharply as buyers rushed to buy new apartments on fears that the shekel's fall would eventually be translated into a higher price.

Food retail chains are also expected to suffer from the depreciation in the short term as a rise in the price of imported products will lead to lower sales. Hapoalim predicts, however, that consumers will

get used to higher prices and will increase their buying as soon as the first quarter of 1999.

Chemical manufacturers such as Makhteshim-Agan Industries and Israel Chemicals stand to benefit in the long run from the depreciation. Textile and electronics companies which export most of their products are also expected to show higher profitability, while metal and paper manufacturers are expected to report a decrease in earnings.

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Can this love at first sight last?

Amnon Lipkin-Shahak has been described as someone people just want to hug. Is that enough to elect him to political office? **Herb Keinson** reports

Better to keep your mouth shut and let people think you're a fool," goes the old adage, "than to open it and remove all doubt."

Nobody, but nobody, thinks Amnon Lipkin-Shahak is a fool. Far from it. Yet Shahak's care in keeping his worldview a mystery, even as he publicly contemplates a run for the country's highest political office, shows an internalization of the above message, though with a radically different twist.

"Better to keep your mouth shut and let people think you're the answer to their prayers," Shahak seems to be telling himself, "than to open it and plant the seeds of doubt."

Inevitably, Shahak will have to open his mouth. Once he does, his popularity will tumble. Right now he is the country's Rorschach test — everyone sees in him what they want.

But as he begins to express his views, the Rorschach inkblots will meld into a true portrait of the former general that may very well still appeal to many, but certainly not as many as now.

Political life does not generally echo that popular song of a generation ago, "To know, know, know him, is to love, love, love him."

Shahak's astounding popularity — various polls indicate he would receive more than 50 percent of the vote if he went head to head with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu — probably says more about the nation and what it thinks of its current leaders than it does about the former chief of general staff.

The Shahak phenomenon, said Daniel Bar-Tal, a professor of political psychology at Tel Aviv University, indicates a society very much in crisis.

"It is a society in true distress," he said. "It is concerned about the peace process, about internal polarization, about the state of its democratic institutions."

In a situation like this, there is deep yearning for someone from the outside who can magically make things right.

"A phenomenon like this could not have happened 10 years ago," said Bar-Tal. "It is happening now because of all the uncertainty, because of all the various concerns. Shahak has come at the right time."

Shahak's popularity, according to Shulamith Kreitler, a Tel Aviv University psychology professor who studies political trends, is indicative of a nation waiting for a savior to come and solve all the problems.

This inclination is not healthy, she said, "but possibly a reaction to a situation where many people are beginning to feel that the problems are just getting too big, and covering too many different spheres — social, political, economic — all at once. When the situation declines, people want someone larger than life."

Kreitler presented two different paradigms of leadership: leaders who gain their positions because of the strength of their characters and personalities, and those who rise because of a specific situation.

Shahak, she maintained, falls into the latter category.

"Israel is facing a very complicated situation," she said. "This can explain why a person whose

positions are unknown is so popular. He is perceived as different from the rest, new. Someone who listens."

DANIEL Elazar, director of the Jerusalem Institute for Public Policy and the opening lecturer at an upcoming Bar-Ilan University conference entitled "Jewish Politics and Political Leadership in Historical Perspective," said there is nothing inherently Jewish, or even Israeli, in what appears to be the country's embrace of Shahak without knowing where he stands.

A yearning for a political savior to ride in on a white horse and solve all of a troubled nation's myriad problems is not a Jewish phenomenon, Elazar said, but a human one.

"We are in a position — and by no means the only ones in the world in this position — where the recognized, competing leaders on either side have not satisfied the public with their performance, ability or probity. So when a fig-

'There's nothing wrong with using intuition to choose political leaders.... The danger is when emotion becomes the exclusive tool of judgment'

— Aaron Ben-Ze'ev, philosophy professor

ure comes along and, on the basis of previous performance in another high position, looks very good, competent, and straightforward, people naturally tend to look to that person for leadership."

"I don't see this support as very deep, however. When Shahak opens his mouth and people hear what he has to say, support will start to zigzag as people begin forming an opinion based on more than just an image from afar."

Yesterday Shahak began to open his mouth — at least a little bit.

In an interview with *Ha'aretz*, he explained that he would prefer to join a centrist party rather than Labor, because he does not want to be identified with a party perceived to be left-wing. He added that he did not think the Left — meaning Labor and Meretz — could win the election for prime minister.

He also said that if polls showed that Dan Meridor — who announced this week that he plans to form a centrist party — is more popular than he is, he would agree to run as Meridor's No. 2.

At a press conference yesterday, held immediately after he was officially discharged from the IDF, he answered few questions. While Shahak did say "We cannot abandon the way of peace," he also stressed that "peace begins at home."

BUT people's image of Shahak has not been formed entirely out of the blue, said Bar-Tal.

"Don't forget that this society values military leaders, probably more than any other Western soci-

ety. Shahak is not coming from Mars. He is coming from the office of the chief of general staff. That still says something to people."

In the great slaying of the Zionist myths that has taken place in this society over the last decade, one myth remains — that of the primacy of the military man.

"We have not killed that myth," Bar-Tal said, "even if we do talk about it a lot."

Shahak's popularity, Bar-Tal agreed, is independent even of the job he did as chief of staff, a job most say he performed capably, though few claim he carried it out exceptionally.

"People don't know whether or not he was a great chief of staff," Bar-Tal said. "There have not been in-depth analyses of this."

Rather, Bar-Tal said, Shahak's popularity stems from his image of being balanced, serious and decisive.

"He projects reasonableness. People are able to relay information through nonverbal behavior, through their tones, their movements," he said.

"There is no doubt that on these channels Shahak excels. He projects trust, confidence, security, quietude. He connects with people at their basic instinctive level — they see him and want to hug him."

ALTHOUGH there may be a tendency to downplay these instinctive feelings, even look down on those who would choose a prime minister because of the way he stands or the manner in which he speaks, Aaron Ben-Ze'ev, a Haifa University philosophy professor and dean of the university's Center for Interdisciplinary Research on Emotions, said that intuition is often a good guide in making choices.

The role basic instinctive feelings and emotions play in decisions is the subject of a just-published book Ben-Ze'ev wrote, entitled *Yashar Mehalev: Regashot Behaye Yom Yom*. An English version of the book, entitled *The Subtlety of Emotion*, is to be published in the US next year.

Ben-Ze'ev said that gut feelings should not be dismissed out of hand when making decisions.

"We have many choices in life," he said. "We are flooded with choices. One of the jobs of our emotions is to filter the choices and point us in the right direction."

"If there are 100 possibilities, emotions help us toss 90 to 95 of them away. The other five we look into."

The same is true of political choices, Ben-Ze'ev said.

"We can't in an in-depth manner, check into every candidate, so we rely on our initial, emotional impression of candidates. Then begins the process of knowing them, experiencing them, and adjusting our positions."

Ben-Ze'ev said it is positive if an emotional, intuitive feeling comes into play when choosing political leaders, just as it is positive when these feelings come into play when choosing a mate. The danger is when emotion becomes the exclusive tool of judgment.

"There is definitely a place for intuitive judgments, but not exclusively," he said. "You also have to use your intellect. Someone may



The qualities Shahak projects are precisely those perceived as lacking in Netanyahu — but is he the political savior Israelis yearn for? (Israel Sun)

be very nice, project confidence and trustworthiness, but you also have to look at what he did in the past, how successful he was, who his friends are."

ACCORDING to Ben-Ze'ev, the characteristics that Shahak projects in a nonverbal manner are precisely those people see lacking in Netanyahu — which partly explains Shahak's popularity.

Netanyahu is a perfect foil to Shahak, he said.

"The image we have of Shahak

plays well against Netanyahu's weaknesses," said Ben-Ze'ev. "Netanyahu has some advantages over Shahak, but his problem is that so many people around him have said they don't trust him. Shahak projects trust, someone who will stand by his word."

Dan Meridor, according to Ben-Ze'ev, also projects the same quality, but is hindered because he has been around politics too long, and is "not something completely new. We know him. Shahak is new."

Because of the country's present dilemmas, people may be more willing now than in the past to trust their emotions in making a political decision, Ben-Ze'ev said. "The more the decision is based on emotion, and the less on intellect, the higher the risk is. People may be more willing to take these risks now because they may look out at the alternatives and think that matters can't get much worse."

Choosing a politician is much like falling in love, the philoso-

pher said. "Haven't you fallen in love with someone before she opened her mouth? This is not stupid. But afterwards you must see if there is anything beyond the physical attraction. If the initial attraction exists, you will give the relationship more of a chance."

Shahak has already turned the country's collective head. The question now is whether his political beauty is more than just skin deep.

The bold and the beautiful

Amnon Lipkin-Shahak has proved his courage and integrity time and again, but does he have a politician's thick skin? **Abraham Rabinovich** profiles the man who catapulted into politics this week

His medals tell part of the story. His lack of swagger may tell even more.

Despite the Sphinx-like image thrust upon him by the enforced discretion of his military status, Amnon Lipkin-Shahak is not an altogether unknown quantity. He has left tracks in places like Beirut and Sinai, Addis Ababa and Taba, and his style — affable and low-key — was apparent in media appearances as chief of general staff. His politics may still be a mystery, but it is already clear that as a political personality he will be a polar opposite to Benjamin Netanyahu.

Shahak won the Medal of Valor, the highest Israel can bestow, for his leadership in a commando raid in Beirut in the spring of 1973. It was one of the boldest operations Israel has ever undertaken — an attack by a small group of men in the heart of an Arab city from which they could not be extricated if things went wrong.

Shahak commanded one of several teams dropped off close to midnight by rubber boats on Beirut's shorefront. One group, headed by Ehud Barak, drove in vehicles left near the shore by

Mossad agents to a residential neighborhood where they killed three Fatah leaders in their apartments.

The target of Shahak's team was an apartment building housing about 100 fighters of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine in another part of Beirut. The team arrived five minutes early and Shahak waited for zero hour before starting the first two men on foot toward their target at the far end of the street. Twenty meters behind snarled another pair, followed by Shahak and then two pairs of sappers. The Israelis

had their weapons under their civilian clothing. A doctor and the drivers remained with the vehicles.

Two armed Palestinians stood guard outside the target building. When the lead pair reached the building, they shot the guards dead at point-blank range and were themselves immediately cut down by unseen guards firing from a nearby vehicle. The second pair of Israelis opened fire on the vehicle — one of them was severely wounded in the exchange. Wakened by the shots, Palestinian fighters in the building began fir-

ing from windows. With surprise gone and a third of the attack force already hit, Shahak decided to press on instead of trying to cut his losses and make it back to the beach with the wounded. Two of the commandos dashed into the building and shot Palestinian fighters racing down the stairs.

Lights indicated a descending elevator. As it reached the ground floor the Israelis in the lobby killed all the gunmen inside. Commandos outside exchanged fire with Palestinians firing from the windows. Meanwhile, one of the Israeli vehicles drew up with explosives and the sappers set charges against the building. The wounded men were carried back to the vehicles which began a mad race for the beach as the building exploded behind them. Two of the wounded died, but the doctor managed to save the third.

The Medal of Valor Shahak was awarded for pressing home the attack in such adverse circumstances was the second such medal he had won.



Chief of staff Shahak in 1996, observing an exercise by paratroopers of the Central Command. He has twice received the Medal of Valor, Israel's highest decoration — for his leadership of a battle in Jordan in 1968, and of a commando raid in Beirut in 1973. (IDF Spokesman)

Starting from zero again

Almost every major Likud figure is against him. He's trailing Amnon Lipkin-Shahak and Ehud Barak in the polls. Is it the beginning of the end for Binyamin Netanyahu? Not necessarily, writes Larry Derfner

I used to be Bibi against the Left. Now it looks like it's Bibi against the world.

Since Monday's Knesset vote to hold early elections, rightists and centrists have jumped ahead of leftists in leading the charge against him. Just about every national figure in the Likud — Dan Meridor, Ehud Olmert, Yitzhak Mordechai, Ze'ev (Beimy) Begin, Limor Livnat, Uzi Landau — has either quit the party, is about to quit, or is plotting to topple Netanyahu from within.

Meridor attacked him for introducing a "system of lies" to Israeli public life. Olmert, quoting President Clinton, in a different context, demanded that he "stop the politics of personal destruction." Begin accused him of "trying to wipe out the national camp in cold blood." For good measure, Yitzhak Shamir called him an "angel of destruction."

These are all people who campaigned for Netanyahu in 1996, and who cheered his victory. Now there's hardly anyone of major stature in the Likud who will say a good word for him.

Furthermore, he's trailing Amnon Lipkin-Shahak by 10 or more points in the polls, and he's behind Barak by three or four points.

So is this the beginning of the end for Netanyahu, arguably the most cunning political animal Israel has ever seen, a politician who went from freshman MK to prime minister in eight years?

Not necessarily, not at all. "If he runs a macho campaign he can win, because macho is what wins in this country. If he runs a *laf-laf* [ramby-pamby] campaign, he'll lose. And so far, Netanyahu's running a macho campaign," said Moti Morrell, one of Israel's top political campaign advisers, who worked on the winning side of the last three national races.

AT Tel Aviv's Carmel Market, a traditional Likud stronghold, a couple of vendors who supported Netanyahu in 1996 said they were through with him because he'd proven untrustworthy and disloyal.

"Look at what he did to Meridor, Livnat, Mordechai, David Levy. Bibi sells out his friends, too fast," said Yossi Madar, behind his mushroom and garlic stand.

But what some call duplicity, a couple of Netanyahu's still-loyal supporters in the souk call shrewdness.

"He knows the political map of Israel better than any of the people against him. He's going to eat them all alive," said Ofer Ezra, running a dried fruit stand.

Interestingly, nobody blamed Netanyahu for the depressing state of the economy.

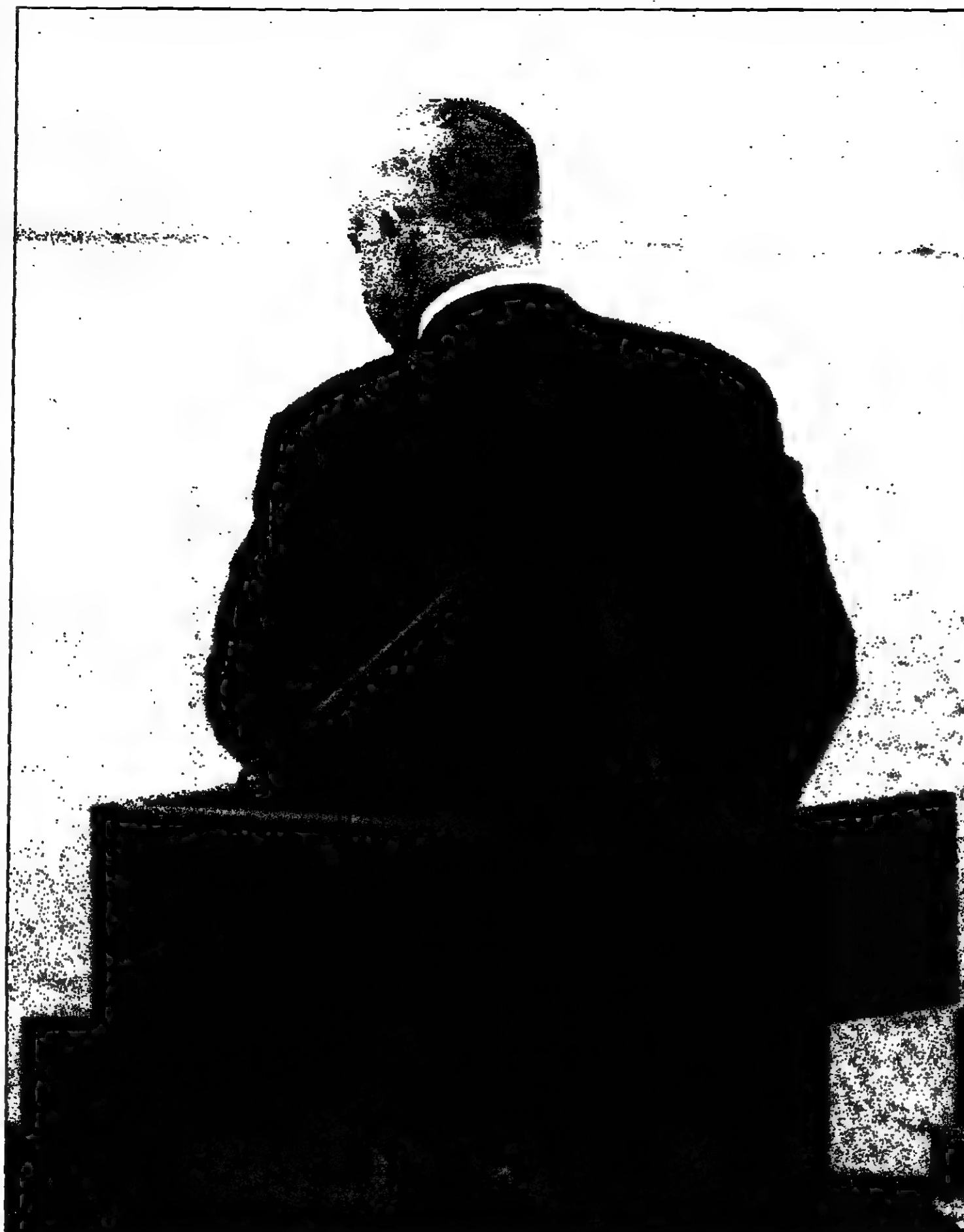
"He inherited a bad economy," said Rafi Mizrahi, working with Madar. This is an argument Netanyahu has made over and over, and it seems to have had an impact.

The prime minister's claims that he and his family have been the victims of character assassination by the Left and the media have also succeeded in winning him sympathy in the souk.

"When *Yedioth Aharonot* ran that filthy article on Sara, I canceled my subscription," said a shopper who identified himself only as Yossi. "Nobody ever gave him a single day of grace."

A few blocks away at Metzudat Ze'ev, Likud headquarters, Tzipora Ben-David, an employee in the legal affairs department for the last six years, said all she was hearing in the building was support for Netanyahu.

The attack by Meridor, she said, "has only strengthened our



Pushed to the wall? It seems so — but what erstwhile Netanyahu supporters call duplicity, many still-loyal supporters call shrewdness.

feeling. People are very angry at Meridor. He spat in the well he drank from."

Old-time Likud activist Yehuda Bareli had this argument in Netanyahu's favor: He is a proven winner, and as such has earned his rightful place as leader of the party.

"He raised the Likud from the ashes after we lost in 1992, and he beat Peres in 1996," Bareli said. "He's the only one who can lead the Likud to victory this time."

NETANYAHU'S central campaign message is that he can best protect Israel's interests in negotiations with the Palestinians over borders, settlements,

Jerusalem, water and other vital issues.

In his Knesset speech before the vote on Monday night, he previewed his tactic for tainting the opposition: "I can promise you that [Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser] Arafat is the first person who thinks any alternative is better than Netanyahu."

Having revealed in his past, in whispered comments to Shas spiritual mentor Rabbi Yitzhak Kadourie, what he thinks of leftists ("The Left has forgotten what it means to be a Jew"), Netanyahu's approach to Shabak has been to brand him a leftist; and he did the same to Meridor.

This may have offended Meridor's friends and fellow

Likud "princes" like Olmert, but Netanyahu's hardcore supporters don't think he said anything wrong.

"When Meridor resigned from the government, he abandoned the Likud, which means he abandoned the policy of peace with security, and began moving over to the Left," said MK Yisrael Katz, a leading force in the Likud Central Committee — the Likud "street" that sides with the "outsider" Netanyahu against the aristocratic princes.

"Meridor now actually leads the Left in spreading slander, incitement and hatred against Netanyahu," Katz continued. "Considering what Meridor said about him, Netanyahu deserves a

prize for courtesy."

Yet, while Netanyahu is trying to run against the Left, he's being accused by traditionalists in his own party — Shamir, Begin, Landau, and, to a lesser extent, Livnat — of implementing the Left's policies.

NETANYAHU'S political godfather, Moshe Arens, said the prime minister "had abandoned the small Jewish community in



Meridor: Silent prayer for a good lead on Netanyahu in the next polls? (Ariel Jerolimski)

Hebron; he endangered their security." Arens also blamed Netanyahu for alienating Meridor, Begin and other Likud stalwarts.

"No prime minister has ever kicked a senior member of his party out of the cabinet like Netanyahu did to Meridor," he noted.

Asked to list his ex-protégé's accomplishments as prime minister, Arens replied: "There is considerably more privatization in the economy than there was before." The list ended there.

Arens said he would wait until the field of candidates in the Likud primaries filled out before deciding whom to support; in the general election, he noted, he would back whichever candidate the Likud nominated.

The assaults on Netanyahu from the Likud royalty didn't seem to shake the prime minister's dedicated supporters. "All that's happened is that three people have left the Likud — Begin, Meridor and Ronni Milo," said Katz.

Netanyahu's critics within the party were badly out of line, he continued. "Olmert is the mayor of Jerusalem, and he should stick to that. What he said will damage his chances in the Likud," Katz warned.

In the souk, Ezra mocked Netanyahu's internal opponents, saying they have no chance to unseat him. "In the end, they'll all come running back to Bibi," he said.

Metzudat Ze'ev employee Ben-David tried to minimize the internal criticism of Netanyahu, saying most of it had been heard before. "We are totally, absolutely behind Netanyahu," she declared.

Repeatedly, Netanyahu's supporters said Begin, Shamir and the rest of the Likud Right were fighting a losing battle for Eretz Yisrael. Netanyahu, they maintained, was the realist battling huge obstacles to make the best of a bad situation — just like he said he was.

CLEARLY, to a substantial sector of the population, Netanyahu has that all-important quality in a prime ministerial election: He's a leader. No matter what he's said, done, or not done, many Israelis want to follow him.

His weak spot in the campaign, Katz said, will be the economy. "Bibi has been good for the state, but bad for the citizens," said the MK, a moshavnik. "It's not just the unemployed, it's the contractors, the moshavim. Everybody's feeling the recession."

Morrell, however, predicted the



Begin, who accused Netanyahu of 'trying to wipe out the national camp in cold blood,' could cut into his strength on the Right. (Ariel Jerolimski)

economy would once again be a "marginal" campaign issue. Netanyahu's main vulnerability, he suggested, could be on the issue of "integrity."

Yet many Israelis don't expect integrity from their politicians. A number of vendors in the souk who declined to be interviewed said they didn't trust any candidate. "They can all go screw themselves — Bibi, Barak and all the rest."

"They're all liars. What do they do for us? All they care about is their jobs," said one vendor, repeating the most popular sentiment there is about Israeli politics.

"What do they mean 'he lies'?" That's not lies, that's politics," explained Bareli.

Morrell said Begin could cut into Netanyahu's strength on the Right, while Katz dismissed Begin as "an extreme right-winger, which means he's in the same boat as Gandhi [MK Rehavam Ze'evi, head of Moledet], who has less than 2% of the vote." The real split in the ranks would come on the Left, between Labor and Shabak. Katz said, predicting a "bloodletting" among Netanyahu's opposition.

The 1996 campaign was rough, to say the least, and unbelievably close — Netanyahu won by 0.98% out of some 3 million votes.

"This election is also going to be very rough and very close," said Katz, picking Netanyahu, naturally, as the winner.

Morrell predicted that Barak and Shabak together will outpoll Netanyahu in the first round, then one of them will face Netanyahu in the runoff. And the winner?

"God knows," was all he could say.

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The euro: What's in it for us

Israel's business, government and retail sectors, as well as simple households, all stand to be affected by the euro's introduction, according to Pinchas Landau, CEO of Tel Aviv-based consultancy Euro Strategies.

The traditional Israeli inclination to think in dollars will now be tempered with a euro currency, says Landau. Housing prices, currently denominated in greenbacks, will ultimately either revert to shekels or else be considered in euros; furthermore, when people ask how the shekel fared on a particular trading day, they will no longer mean only against the dollar.

Europe is already Israel's major trading partner, and its shift to a unified currency will force its firms into an efficiency drive resulting in reduced prices, which in turn will further accelerate Israel's European imports.

Meanwhile, as Israel's currency regime rapidly liberalizes, investors will dedicate sizable portions of their portfolios to euro-denominated investments. In the business sector, importers and exporters will find that their European interlocutors insist on euro payments rather than dollars, so as to save the exchange costs.

The euro's deepest impact in Israel, according to Landau, will be on exporters and the tourism industry, who will have to strengthen their presence in Europe, in order to benefit from the euro's introduction.

European companies are embarking on a new era of reduced exposure to risks emanating from currency and interest-rate fluctuations.

Set against this backdrop, companies must think in terms of a much larger market, says Landau. Consequently, size offers new advantages, which explains why Europe is awash with a wave of mergers and acquisitions. Israeli companies, he says, will also have to grow, whether by acquiring, merging, expanding or entering

into strategic agreements with other companies.

The euro can also hold promise for Israeli firms, according to Landau.

Companies currently dealing simultaneously with several European countries will see their accounting simplified, while benefiting from a more competitive and efficient European banking system.

In financial markets, the formation of a unified European capital market will make Europe a lucrative, and sometimes more liquid, alternative to Israeli share offerings in Wall Street.

At the same time, foreign investors may funnel in Tel Aviv's direction some previously Europe-bound capital, since the continent's choices

will have become much less diverse, while Israel's traditionally inflation-haunted debt market may continue to offer relatively high interest rates. On the other hand, the local financial sector is expected to suffer from accelerated foreign competition.

Still, Israeli business has yet to wake up to the new reality, according to Landau. Apart from the chemical sector, most firms have so far pretty much ignored the dawn of the euro. The good news in this respect is that many European firms are also slow to internalize the changes ahead of them. However, the Israeli high-tech sector will not be able to ignore the euro much longer.

On the macro-economic level, Landau believes the new era will also have a profound effect on Jerusalem, since the euro-enforced EU will evolve into a much more assertive diplomatic force to reckon with.

Not coincidentally, the only Israeli institution fully aware of, and prepared for, the euro's arrival is the Bank of Israel, which has adopted a euro-oriented, long-term view of the shekel's place among the nations.

- Dan Gerstenfeld

January 1: Dawn of the euro

It will cement Europe and likely be a very solid currency, but the euro's take-off next week is fraught with risk, writes Amotz Asa-Eli



Buying tickets for the first-ever Euro Loto in France this week, worth seven million euros, or \$8.19 million. (AP)

The Chinese invented bills and coins, the Italians fathered commercial banking, the British perfected central banking, the Americans devised plastic cards and cybercash, and next week the European Union will denationalize money, by introducing the euro.

While the events on January 1 are intentionally designed not to be too dramatic, both euro-fans and skeptics agree that the new currency's advent represents no less than a revolution, one clearly bound to spill beyond its newly named Euroland confines, and impact on America, Asia, and Israel too (see box).

When they return in 10 days from their New Year vacations, West Europeans will find that the 70 billion coins and 12 billion bills they currently circulate have not been replaced with the euro's planned bills and coins (a total of 15 different types) — that is scheduled to take place only in January 2002, six months before the old money officially ceases to circulate.

What is to happen this January, however, is that the euro will become an official currency for all non-cash intents and purposes. In other words, stock prices, company balances and national accounts among the currency's 11 founding member states will be quoted in euros.

Behind this seemingly technical change lurks a remarkable experiment in voluntary relinquishment of national sovereignty.

In premodern times, money was pretty much just another consumer product, often minted by private entrepreneurs who then sold it to governments and individuals. What passed for money, how much of it would be in circulation, and at what interest or exchange rates, was effectively abandoned to the markets' devices.

Only in the 17th century, when some Dutch notables figured that too many disparate and often counterfeit coins were circulating, did they begin to regulate the production and distribution of money.

Shortly after that, the Bank of England perfected that creation and became history's first powerful central bank: namely, the agency responsible for creating, supplying and upholding the value of money.

Since central banking came in tandem with the rise of the modern nation state, it haphazardly evolved as a national institution — because the capacity to create money has been considered, since antiquity, a basic and indispensable sign of sovereign power.

Ultimately, central banks became part and parcel of the nationalist experience, playing major roles in both disciplining and derailing nation-state economies.

Thus, for instance, when the French franc tumbled in currency markets in July 1993, the Banque de France hiked interest rates — much like the Bank of Israel did this fall under similar circumstances. Conversely, when a newly reunited Germany realized that unemployment in its post-communist eastern regions was rampant, the Bundesbank lowered interest rates lest the depressed labor markets result in deflation.

The newly established European Central Bank (ECB) will be assigned to do these sorts of things, but while simultaneously catering for the needs of 11 countries rather than one.

IN other words, suppose, say, Ireland faces a labor crisis. Dublin will no longer be able to react by lowering interest rates or raising exchange rates, since it will no

longer have a currency exclusively its own; instead, the euro's interest rates will be set by a sterile ECB in faraway Frankfurt, where Ireland's governor will be but one of 11 central bankers who collectively form the ECB's board of governors.

Now, suppose the Irish governor tells that forum that he wants the euro to be cheaper for a while, so as to address a job crisis in his country, but the other governors, whose countries have no such crisis, are fearful that a weaker euro would accelerate inflation in their countries. What then?

That is the crux of the unknown into which the EU will be venturing next month. Not to forget the euro-skepticism that contributed to Margaret Thatcher's downfall, led Britain, Denmark and Sweden to shun the euro project, and even made one Harvard scholar, Martin Feldstein, predict that the new inorganic currency will not only fail as an exercise in political re-engineering but also generate a European war.

STILL, the voluntary replacement of national institutions with a continental framework is the happiest aspect of the drama about to unfold in Europe. It is no coincidence that the driving forces behind the monetary union saga were France and Germany.

Haunted by the traumas of three blood-soaked conflicts over the last 12 decades, leaders from both countries, particularly the late French president François Mitterrand, former German chancellor Helmut Kohl, and former European Union commissioner Jacques Delors, crusaded for the cause even when the odds were steeply against it. They wanted to shackle their countries to a common future, precisely in order to make an economic crisis in one EU corner the business of Europeans elsewhere in the union.

Such a political universe, where aren't keen on relocating geographically in order to work.

During the Bush-era recession, for instance, the states of Florida and Washington were faring better than others: the former, thanks to its retirement industry; the latter because of its veteran aerospace and burgeoning software industries. Consequently, Americans from hard-hit places as far afield as Massachusetts migrated there.

Chances that such dynamics will evolve in Euroland are very low, since Europeans are loath to move even within their own countries, let alone across the border — not to mention to a destination where a different language is spoken.

Moreover, Europe's labor markets are not only less mobile, but also less flexible, since they are, on the whole, burdened by social legislation that makes hiring and firing much more difficult than it is in the US.

In other words, the ECB will be

handling its currency as if it were the mighty US Federal Reserve, while in reality it will be presiding over a highly disjointed and sclerotic structure — which might indeed fall apart if not handled with extreme care.

FUSING together 11 currencies is a daunting prospect by any measure, but now, set against a very poorly timed backdrop of global financial turmoil, sharply contracting world trade and stubborn post-Cold War East-West tensions, the euro's take-off seems fraught with even more dangers than its inventors took into consideration.

And yet the euro project is being

Behind a 'technical' change lurks a remarkable experiment in relinquishment of national sovereignty

GDP, maximum inflation of 2.7%, and interest rates no higher than 7.8% (conditions which left EU member Greece out of Euroland, for now) have had a profound impact on hitherto budgetarily derelict countries like Italy.

The long-term effect of this newly achieved discipline already looms large as a healthy economic sphere — sharply contrasting with Southeast Asia's degenerate economic norms, which in recent months have become glaringly apparent.

On the micro-economic level, the European Union expects the disappearance of currency-exchange costs for most intra-EU transactions to save some \$40 billion, or 0.5% of Euroland's GDP annually.

Similarly, the ease with which wages and prices will now be compared between places as far-flung as Lisbon and Helsinki should accelerate cross-border trade, much like that which takes place among US states.

Moreover, just as most US firms care little about the dollar's travails abroad since a good 80% of US business is domestic, EU businesses are also bound to care — and pay — a lot less for exchange-rate fluctuations.

In such a landscape business confidence rises and efficiency sharpens. Euroland might be less homogeneous than the US, but in terms of population and GDP, its clout easily surpasses Japan's and can only be rivaled by America's.

Some even contend that the euro will ultimately replace the dollar as the world's major currency. Maybe, but before that it will hopefully shine as proof that politicians and bureaucrats, better known for waging war and piling up red tape can also generate an ambitious, inventive and daring scheme, transforming former enemies into bedfellows.

With reporting by David Zev Harris



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'Babes in Goyland'

Dealing with Christmas is part of the reality of being Jewish in America. Sue Fishkoff views an unusual exhibit at San Francisco's Jewish Museum



An 'anti-Christmas' card Alison Kaiser made features a cutout photograph of herself and a young cousin as children, sitting on Santa's lap, looking decidedly grumpy.

Every Jewish kid who's grown up in America knows the feeling of being left out at Christmas. The Santas, the carols, the Christmas tree blazing with lights — they're not for you. Lighting the hanukkah and maybe playing a little dreidel pales in comparison to what has become a six-week, all-out holiday blitz for the majority, non-Jewish population.

Today, the Jewish Museum of San Francisco strikes back when it opens "Alternativity: The Other Side of Christmas," featuring 15 artists' interpretations of feeling marginalized on Jesus's birthday.

"Every year, the museum is open on Christmas, with strolling klezmer musicians and our regular exhibit, but usually our focus is helping people escape Christmas," says Barbara Gar Reichman, who curated "Alternativity."

"This is the first year we're having a show that directly addresses the issue. Dealing with Christmas is part of the reality of being Jewish in America."

Most, but not all, of the artists featured in the show are Jewish. Several are non-Jews who feel alienated by the crass materialism that has overtaken the holiday's spiritual essence.

"The Jewish outsiderhood is obvious," Reichman says. "But for non-Jews family issues, commercialism, and other things can make people feel lonely at Christmas."

Still, it is the Jewish artists' works that hit home with greater poignancy, perhaps because their marginalization is more distinct, or perhaps because so much of what they show deals with hurtful memories from their childhood.

"It's much harder when you're a kid," says San Francisco artist Barbara Mann, who has one piece in the exhibition. Mann, who grew up in a predominantly Catholic neighborhood in South Orange, New Jersey, in the late '60s and '70s, remembers making Christmas ornaments and singing carols in her elementary school.

"On one hand, I felt excluded," she recalls. "On the other hand, while I envied their joyous celebration, I resented having to participate in Christmas at school. Having them throw in the dreidel song was no compensation."

Mann says her parents were always "very clear" that Christmas was not their holiday. On December 25, they'd plan a family day — going to the movies and playing games to lessen the impact. But Mann still has vivid memories of walking past department-store windows in New York City as a child — Macy's, Saks, Lord and Taylor — and feeling awkward, even incensed, at the opulent holiday window displays.

That's the memory she chose to recreate in "Looking In," a triptych

featuring three photomontages of Mann peering into the festively-decorated windows of Saks and Macy's in San Francisco this holiday season.

In one photo, her sad reflection bounces off a jolly Santa Claus display, while a small green cartoon labeled "Gucci Envy" is captured fortuitously in the frame's lower

margin.

"My concept was a self-portrait, my image reflected in the window, to show there's always a barrier between myself and this experience," she says.

"The worst part of doing this project was standing outside Macy's and Saks and having them pipe Christmas music out at me as I pho-

tographed myself."

SEVERAL of the works in this exhibit are playful, treating the theme of marginalization with zesty humor. In "Oy to the World (Seasonal Stockings for Jews)," Rhonda Lieberman stuffs four red, ermine-trimmed Christmas stockings with chocolate Hanukkah gelt.

The names of each member of this typical Jewish-American family are emblazoned in glitter on his or her stocking: Shlomo, Rivka, Chaim and Tiffany.

Alison Kaiser displays some of the "anti-Christmas" cards she's made and sent to her friends over the past 15 years.

One features a cutout photograph of herself and a young cousin as children, sitting on Santa's lap, looking decidedly grumpy.

In "Babes in Goyland," artist Lisa Kokin chronicles in a series of ironic collages the day she was asked to repair a broken creche scene by the nun who headed the retirement home where she taught art.

Calling herself a "Shabbos goy in reverse," she recalls that "the irony of the situation was more than I could bear. The sister offered me money for my efforts, but I refused, hoping to chalk up some mitzva points that might come in handy in the future."

In a second piece, Kokin's humor becomes darker. In words scrawled on a roll of paper hanging down from an old-fashioned laundry wringer, she relates the story of a well-meaning but ignorant store clerk who, trying to recover from a botched Christmas greeting to

Kokin, said: "Now, what is it I just heard about Jews? Oh yeah, I was watching a TV series on Jews. It was about a Jew who killed a lot of people. Wait a minute, now that I think about it, he was really a Nazi pretending to be a Jew. Anyway, it was about Jews."

The clerk waves Kokin happily on her way with a "Merry I mean, Happy New Year!"

"Being a Jew in the holiday season is like having PMS for two months straight," Kokin grumbles in the artist's statement that hangs next to her work. "Usually my stomach tightens up the first time I hear the Musak version of 'Joy to the World' in Walgreen's. I plod around with a scowl on my face, just waiting for the first innocent, unsuspecting Christian to wish me a 'Merry Christmas.'"

The centerpiece of "Alternativity" is "Talking Tents," an interactive video installation by Jeffrey Winter and Jose G. of Please Louise Productions/Museo Contempo. The pair interviewed San Francisco-area Jews about their memories of and feelings about Christmas. The edited interviews will be shown continuously on a large white wall in the center of the exhibition.

In addition, at the show's opening on Christmas Day, Winter and G. will conduct on-the-spot interviews with visitors about their Christmas experiences for a live feed that will be broadcast onto the central wall and on several TV screens.

WINTER says he was most intrigued by the interviews he conducted with kids in Temple Emanuel's fifth-grade Hebrew Sunday school class. He was shocked to find that nearly all the children were from intermarried families.

"I knew when I moved to the Bay Area from New York that the Jewish community here was very assimilated — but 80 to 90 percent," he says. "But all these kids were sent to Hebrew school."

And rather than feeling left out at Christmas, as Winter did when he was a boy, these kids feel they have the best of both worlds: They get to celebrate Christmas and Hanukkah. "They don't feel it as a conflict," he says.

Both Mann and Winter say this is the first time they've worked with a Jewish theme in their art. They both felt the impact strongly.

"I found it a very cathartic project. It gave me a focal point for the emotions I feel at this time of year," Mann says.

"I'm not religious, but my Jewish feelings really come home once a year. There's my anger at the commercialism, and my realization that I always come back to my Jewish roots."

Last year, Winter participated in a similar project about feelings of marginalization at Christmas, titled "Homo for the Holidays," about being homosexual and single at a time of year devoted to family togetherness.

"A lot of the issues are the same," he insists.

"Both are about alienation at a time of year when you're not supposed to feel that way. He learned more from this year's exhibit, because he says, he thinks less often about his identity as a homosexual."

But, he notes, he's never felt as Jewish as in the seven years since he moved to California from New York.

"In New York, you're surrounded by Jews, so you don't feel it as much," he says. "In California, with the conspicuous lack of Jews, I feel more Jewish."

Mann contrasts the alienation she continues to feel as an adult, subjected to the relentless commercialism and forced gaiety of the American Christmas season, with the complete absence of Christmas she experienced one year when she visited her brother, who lives in Nahariya.

"It was very strange, not having it all around you," she says. "Kind of nice."

Dry Bones

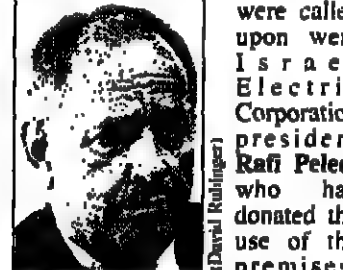


GRAPEVINE By GREER FAY CASHMAN

At his annual reception to celebrate Hanukkah, Ramadan and Christmas, Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert went in search of a modern-day miracle as he urged Jewish, Moslem and Christian spiritual leaders to make enormous efforts to create the psychological and emotional environment that would make the city a more friendly place for residents and visitors.

Olmert called for a greater understanding and tolerance "that will allow all of us to dream our own dreams in mutual respect."

Shilon: smoke without fire
Tichon: didn't speak



WHEN Raya Jaglom, president of the Israeli Friends of Tel Aviv University, planned a Hanukkah party in honor of TAU's International Forum, she had no idea it would coincide with what might have accelerated into Gulf War II.

Among those in attendance were former prime minister Yitzhak Shamir, who was in office during the Gulf War, former Israel ambassador to the UN Gad Ya'acobi, and Shamir's former bureau chief, Avi Pazner, who recently completed his tour of duty as Israel's ambassador to France to take up the position of world chairman of Keren Hayesod. While other guests adjourned to partake of the smoked salmon and other delicacies, the three huddled on a couch in Jaglom's elegant living room to shmooze about past crises.

Sayder and Yehuda Ravetz, chairman of the Friends of the Israel Museum, who was accompanied to the affair not only by his wife, Tami, but by their daughters Shirli, Tali and Gili.

Despite his absence, museum founder and former Jerusalem mayor Teddy Kolek was given a loud and lengthy round of applause. Tel Aviv Mayor Ron Huldai lit the Hanukkah candles and pronounced the blessings.

HULDAI later moved on to the home of journalist and socialite Mira Avrech, where, for the 10th consecutive year, the Hanukkah candles were lit by Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau. The numerous diplomats who had gathered for the occasion laughed heartily when former prime minister Shimon Peres recounted that during a visit to Iceland, the prime minister of that country had said to him: "You are the chosen people, but we are the frozen people." In a slightly more somber mood, Peres observed that Israel has now taken on the frozen identity: "We have a frozen economy, a frozen budget, a frozen peace process, a frozen Wye Plantation agreement and a frozen government," he said.

One of the highlights of the evening was the rendering of "Maoz Tzur" by Bank of Israel governor Jacob Frenkel.

KNOWN far and wide for his bar mitzva ceremonies at the Western Wall — primarily for Americans celebrating this special occasion in their lives in Israel — Rabbi Jay Karzen and his wife, Ruby, this week had a bar mitzva celebration of their own — the 13th anniversary of their aliya. Gazing out at some 170 of their relatives and friends, most of whom they met only after coming to live here, Ruby Karzen, a former president of the Association of Americans and Canadians in Israel, said: "From here, this looks like an AACI convention."

"Everyone celebrates birthdays and almost everyone celebrates anniversaries," added her husband, "so why not celebrate aliya day?"

When the Karzens left Chicago in December 1985, they had neither pensions nor jobs. But they have not been idle since they got here. Aside from numerous volunteer activities, she has been working as an interior decorator while he, when not conducting bar mitzva ceremonies, sells burial plots.

It's a happy period altogether for the couple, who are also celebrating their 42nd wedding anniversary, his birthday and the publication of his book *Off the Wall*.



Peres: 'chosen, not frozen'

Ministry of Health Spokesperson's Office

The Committee for the Determination of Responsibility for Injuries Sustained from Medical Treatment

Further to a decision reached by the Committee, headed by Judge Dr. Gabriel Kling, a working paper will be published, consisting of a draft of the report to be submitted by the Committee. The Committee will summarize the report submitted, once response from the public has been received.

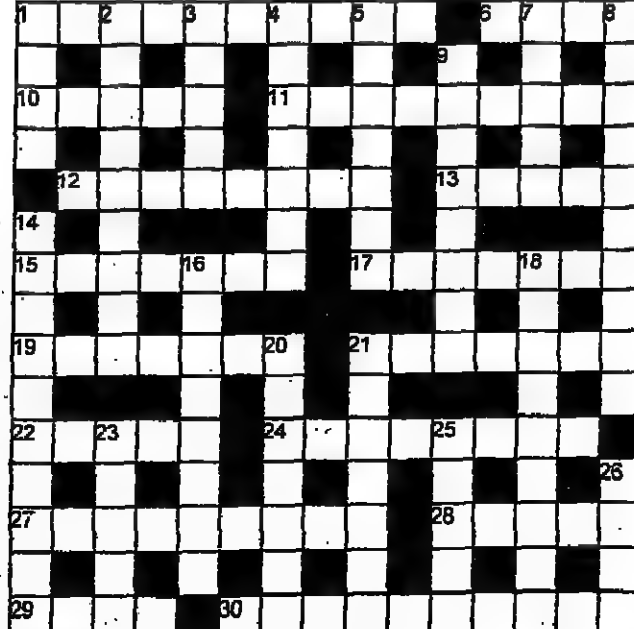
Responses may be submitted in writing no later than Sunday, March 18, 1999—Nisan 1, 5759 to the Committee Coordinator, M. Hibner-Harel, Att., Legal Adviser for the Ministry of Health, 2 Ben Tabai St., Jerusalem.

The working paper can be obtained from the Legal Adviser's Office at the Ministry of Health, 2 Ben Tabai St., Jerusalem. Tel: 02-670-5885.

The working paper also appears on our web site: www.health.gov.il/dh/

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

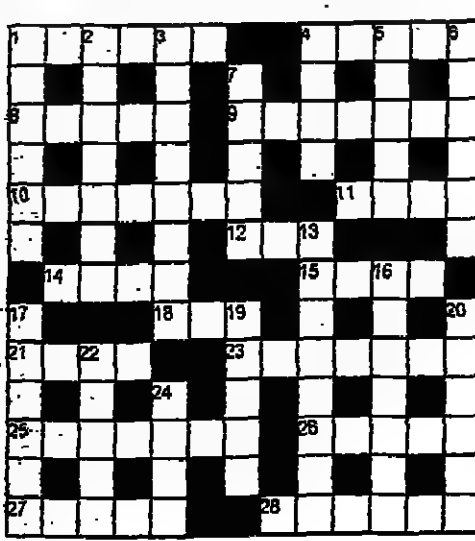
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|---|--|---|
| <p>ACROSS</p> <p>1 Californian banker makes entreaty after Eucharist (10)</p> <p>6 Crack shot (4)</p> <p>10 Carol may not embrace Henry (5)</p> <p>11 Apply oneself anew to study costume (9)</p> <p>12 Quickly produced two slices of meat (4-4)</p> <p>13 A multitude returning from Indian state (5)</p> <p>15 Works to disclose division of unknown quantity (7)</p> <p>17 A famous writer? The devil it is! (7)</p> <p>19 Essay about ancient drama (7)</p> <p>21 Left-wing video exposes excessive formality (3-4)</p> | <p>22 Urge to see one's breakfast cooking? (3,3)</p> <p>24 Use a filter again to check (8)</p> <p>27 How to apply cosmetic varnish pronto (2,3-4)</p> <p>28 A couple need support (5)</p> <p>29 Some pupils work industriously in class (4)</p> <p>30 One-metre gable causes an obstruction (10)</p> | <p>many basic requirements (5)</p> <p>8 Expert ex-teacher (4,6)</p> <p>9 Given credit for having made headway (8)</p> <p>14 Out of trouble whilst sailing past south west Holland (3,3-4)</p> <p>16 A bloomer no dealer made (8)</p> <p>18 I created a disturbance to cause destruction (9)</p> <p>20 CID to carry weapons on board ship (4-3)</p> <p>21 Determination to find another answer (7)</p> <p>23 Managed to travel over 100mph (3,2)</p> <p>25 Butler and bishop meet one religious leader (5)</p> <p>26 Beat the unbeatable (4)</p> |
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QUICK CROSSWORD

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>ACROSS</p> <p>1 Male title (6)</p> <p>4 Harsh noise (5)</p> <p>8 Diving bird (5)</p> <p>9 Unvarying (7)</p> <p>10 Dressed (7)</p> <p>11 Nimble (4)</p> <p>12 Tree (3)</p> <p>14 Dry (of wine) (4)</p> <p>15 Muslim prayer-leader (4)</p> <p>18 Flow back (3)</p> <p>21 Spot (4)</p> <p>23 Speech (2)</p> <p>25 Deadlock (7)</p> <p>26 Of the ear (5)</p> <p>27 Stockpile (5)</p> <p>28 Catapults (6)</p> | <p>DOWN</p> <p>1 Hungarian (6)</p> <p>2 Refuge (7)</p> <p>3 Curse (8)</p> <p>4 Enticement (4)</p> <p>5 Dwelling-place (5)</p> <p>6 Hostility (6)</p> <p>7 Rubicund (5)</p> <p>13 Unexpected gain (6)</p> <p>16 Vitamin B: (7)</p> <p>17 Acme (6)</p> <p>19 Jewish bread roll (5)</p> <p>20 Sacred songs (6)</p> <p>22 — New Guinea (5)</p> <p>24 Exploited (4)</p> |
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OLD KATAMON, 3, TERRACE, first floor, small office, 73 m., great location. E-mail: deborah@postco.il Fax: 072-2-565-9118, Tel. 072-2-561-7554 (NS).

GERMAN COLONY, UNIQUE PENTHOUSE, 4 luxurious, large terraces, parking (no commission). DI VEROL-SIANI. Tel. 02-561-8424. [19944]

GERMAN COLONY, UNIQUE, 2 rooms, garden, basement, parking. DI VEROL-SIANI. Tel. 02-561-8424. [19944]

RASCO (HATKUFIA), 4, view, south, close to AC, parking. E-mail: portico@netvision.net.il Tel. 02-563-1764. [88]

HABITAT EXCLUSIVE REAL ESTATE, center, 3, spacious, views, quiet, Shabbat elevator, \$210,000. Tel. Eshud 02-561-1222. [20349]
E-mail: portico@netvision.net.il

HABITAT EXCLUSIVE REAL ESTATE, Nahlat, 2, renovated, luxurious, special Shabbat, 3, low floor, south facing, Shabbat, immediate Rehava, 4, renovated, great quiet, special price! Bayit VEGAN, 6, luxurious, new! large patio, excellent quality! Old Katamon, cottage, 7 prestigious, luxurious, great location! Tel. 02-561-1222 (Dalia). [20500]
E-mail: portico@netvision.net.il

OLD TALPIOT: SUPERB cottage, 10 rooms, luxurious, private lift, parking. T.A.C. Tel. 02-563-1764. [88]

BAKA: 3, ARAB house, superb, modern, large open balcony, sunny, quiet, exclusive. T.A.C. Tel. 02-563-1764. [88]

NEAR KING DAVID, unique apartment in Arab house, high ceilings, only \$196,000, immediate! Exclusive SHIRAN through AHUZZAT BAYIT. Tel. 02-565-2111. [88]

KIRYAT WOLFSON - LUXURIOUS villa, 200 sq.m. plus terrace, 2 parking spaces, 2 store rooms, \$780,000. Tel. 02-676-421. [20279]

UNIQUE! MUSRARA, ELISHA Street, new, spacious, 4 + 1/2 bedrooms, parking, immediate. AMBASSADOR Tel. 02-561-8101. [20304]

BEIT HAKEREM - COTTAGE, 6, new, quiet, rental available. Tel. 02-551-1451, 050-403-743. [88]

HABITAT REAL ESTATE, German Colony, large, modern detached house, patio, parking. Tel. 02-561-1222 (Dalia). E-mail: portico@netvision.net.il [20341]

HABITAT REAL ESTATE, Talbich, 5, luxurious, air conditioning, Shabbat elevator, elevator, Tel. 02-561-1222 (Dalia). E-mail: portico@netvision.net.il [20341]

KIRYAT SHMUEL, PENTHOUSE, duplex, 5, large, view, terrace, lift. T.A.C. Tel. 02-563-1764. [20375]

KIRYAT SHMUEL, 4 + DINETTE, balconies, view of the Knesset, elevator, parking, Nahlat (next to Wolfson), 6.5, 2nd floor, balcony, storage room, view of the Knesset, parking, storage room (shul). BEN ZVI. Tel. 02-563-0066, 052-601-844. [88]

MORDOT-HOLYLAND! LUXURIOUS COTTAGE, 4, gardens, terraces, view, immediate occupancy. AMBASSADOR. Tel. 02-561-8101. [20347]

REHAVA! MISHCHAN-HAIR, 6 + terrace, covered parking. AMBASSADOR. Tel. 02-561-8101. [20347]

BAKA - YAIR - WONDERFUL, high corner apartment, 5.5 rooms, garden, terraces, SHIRAN exclusive through MONTEFIORE REALTY. Tel. 02-625-2071. [20643]

UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY ON Shmuel Levine Street, half of duplex, spacious, beautiful, large garden, balconies, view, possibility to enlarge and/or divide into separate units. Tel. 02-641-3380, 050-234-567. [21323]

USSISHKIN, 3, RENOVATED, porch, masonry, roof rights, 2nd floor. Tel. 02-676-5560 (N.S.). [21616]

SHARAI CHESED - REHAVA, private house, best location, best view. Tel. 050-631-119. [792235]

ALEX LOSKY REAL ESTATE: Rehava, 6 ground floor, great character, huge garden, central location. Tel. 02-625-5595. (CHRE) [88]
E-mail: losky@netvision.net.il

ALEX LOSKY REAL ESTATE presents: Cottage in Old Talpiot, 5.5 rooms, huge garden, covered parking, storage. Mail seat \$550,000. Tel. 02-623-5595 [88]

BAKA (SHIMSHON), ONE-FAMILY Arab house, garden, 210 m. LILY L.V.T. Tel. 02-563-9339. [20720]

BARGAIN IN TALBICH (MAPU), 4, 120 sq.m., 1st floor, elevator, \$360,000. Exclusive to AMBASSADOR. Tel. 02-561-8101. [88]

BEIT HAKEREM, COTTAGE, 4 spacious rooms, private entrance, garden, view, double covered parking, storage room. Exclusive to CENTURY 21. Tel. 02-679-2121. [20611]

EFRAI, A GOOD PLACE to live in, plots, houses, cottages, new and second hand apartments (also rentals). MIRIAM REALTY. Tel. 02-563-1833. [20662]

EFRAI, DUPLEX VILLA, large rooms, spacious kitchen, large garden. Tel. 02-563-1525. [20291]

EFRAI, HALF DUPLEX, 8, style, great location and view. Exclusive MIRIAM REALTY. Tel. 02-563-1833. [20667]

SIN KEREM, QUIET, rustic villa, 6 + 1/2, spacious, lovely established garden, view, double covered parking. Tel. 02-673-3385. [88]
E-mail: corinne@netvision.net.il

GERMAN COLONY, 5, superb penthouse, overlooking park, covered parking, elevator, store room, central AC. Tel. 02-679-4911. [6341]

DWELLINGS

Jerusalem Area

GERMAN COLONY, QUIET lane, very developed property - when rebuilt, could provide an outstanding single family house. CAPITAL. Tel. 02-679-4911. [8842]

EXCLUSIVE NADLIM PLUS: German Colony, prestigious project, penthouse + huge terrace, elevator + storage room. Tel. 02-567-0707. [88]

GERMAN COLONY, SUPERB location, exclusive project, townhouse, 4, loft, garden, covered parking, store room. CORINNE DAVAR. Tel. 02-673-3385. [88]
E-mail: corinne@netvision.net.il

GILO, LEV HAPARK, fabulous view of Jerusalem, 5 rooms (two on top floor), built on 3.5 floors (24 steps total), parents unit with walk-in closet area and bathroom, 2 balconies, private heating, security bars, beautiful kitchen, lift. Tel. 02-575-6586. [88]

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HABITAT EXCLUSIVE REAL ESTATE, Givat Haimar villa, free standing, spacious, elegant + 2 studio apartments. Tel. 02-561-1222 (Dalia). [88]
E-mail: portico@netvision.net.il

GIVAT ORANIM, 5, renovated, facing magnificent view, quiet, covered parking and storage. Exclusive to AMBASSADOR. Tel. 02-561-8101. [88]

HAR NOF (DERECH BARNET), luxurious, 2-room cottage, 280 sq.m., garden, terraces, view. Tel. 054-401-111 (David). [796366]

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KIRYAT MOSHE, 5 ROOMS, amazing beautiful, special + including a complete, 2-room unit + parking + storage. Serious only. AVI KOREN REALTY. Tel. 02-671-6740. [88]

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MUSRARA, APARTMENT in Arab building, unique, 80 meters, gallery, renovated, stylized. Tel. 02-634-1471, 050-312-801. [792268]

NEVE SHARON, 4.5, spacious, panoramic view, \$255,000. Keys DE PRONT REALTY. Tel. 02-566-3314, Tel. 052-891-880. [88]

OLD KATAMON, SPECIAL house, new apartment, 3, 58 sq.m., 2nd floor balcony, AC, 2nd floor, Shabbat, elevator, \$360,000. Exclusive to WEINSTEIN. Tel. 02-563-0606. [8310]

OLD KATAMON, BEAUTIFUL 9 room townhouse, 3 floors, large basement, private entrance, garden. \$950,000. Exclusive EHRMAN REAL ESTATE. Tel. 02-565-8650. [18351]

OLD KATAMON, 4, first floor, elevator, view, private underground parking, store room, private heating. CAPITAL. Tel. 02-679-4911. [8333]

DWELLINGS Sharon Area

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HERZLIYA PITUAH, CHOICE LUXURIOUS villa, 111 long-term, SHASHUA, Tel. 03-957-0678. [19359]

HERZLIYA HATZITRA, 4, FURNISHED, luxurious + sun balcony + elevator. Immediate. Tel. 03-957-2016, 03-956-6667. [21805]

HERZLIYA PITUAH, LARGE comfortable, 5, furnished, seawater, long / short, immediate. Tel. 03-955-7930 (NIS).

HERZLIYA PITUAH - MAGNIFICENT new villa with indoor pool, 5 bedrooms, Exclusive to EVERGREEN. Tel. 03-958-8383, Fax. 03-956-8557. [8]

OFFICE TO RENT IN HERZLIYA PITUAH, 27 sq.m., luxurious building, parking, pool. Tel. 03-522-7598, Tel. 03-957-2171. [794918]

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HERZLIYA PITUAH, VILLA, renovated, fireplace, long term. \$1,800 (rent), \$750,000 (sale). Tel. 03-958-234-778 [794908]

DWELLINGS Sharon Area

NETANYA FOR SALE
• 5 Room Apt. - Nitzan Blvd., high floor, magnificent sea view with sun balcony -
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• 5 Room - Near city center, high floor Just \$205,000
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NETANYA - BEAUTIFUL, NEW, fully furnished and equipped house close to sea shore and country club, for sale or rent. PHILLIP BENSON REAL ESTATE. Tel. 03-952-1517, Fax. 03-984-5031 E-mail: bensop@internet-zahav.net [796427]

NEW SPECIAL HOUSE, western Ramat Hasharon, exceptional, quiet location, view. Tel. 03-540-5915. [20372]

HERZLIYA PITUAH, IN DANIEL Hotel, spacious studio, on sea front, \$159,000. Tel. 03-958-591. [19358]

HERZLIYA PITUAH, EXCLUSIVE area, close to the sea, large villa, magnificent, amazing. SHASHUA. Tel. 03-957-0678. [21556]

HERZLIYA-BET, MODERN, LUXURIOUS villa! 4 floors! \$890,000. Tel. 03-958-0558. [21529]

BARGAIN! KFAR-SHARIYA, LUXURIOUS, not new, pool, \$900,000. Tel. 03-958-0558, 03-298-521. [21805]

SALE/RENTAL, CAESAREA, LUXURIOUS house, amazing garden + pool. Tel. 03-931-725, 03-536-128. [2476]

HERZLIYA PITUAH - INVESTMENT! Guaranteed yearly income for 3-5 years. Villa on 1000 sq. m. plot, great location, excellent condition. EVERGREEN. Tel. 03-958-8383, Fax. 03-956-8557. [8]

RENTAL/SALE, HERZLIYA PITUAH, luxurious house, breathtaking garden + pool. Tel. 03-538-128, 03-955-2892. [2475]

HERZLIYA PITUAH APARTMENT, 5 large, 160 m, swimming pool, \$410,000, OREN DUNSKY. Tel. 03-957-3098. [21407]

DWELLINGS Haifa and North

SALES
ATLIT, PRIVATE HOUSE, 2 floors, 335 sq.m., situated on 1,200 sq.m. private land with possibility to build another house. Tel. 04-964-1934, 052-424-588 (Evelyn). [796318]

IN HAIFA (DANIA), exclusive, invested villa, 400 sq.m. / 900 sq.m. Tel. 04-834-3705, 050-289-758. [796431]

MA'ALOT, COTTAGE, DUPLEX, luxurious, new, 170 sq.m. + garden 180 sq.m., \$179,000. Tel. 04-857-3342 (eva). [796384]

DWELLINGS Mod'in Region

RENTALS
MOD'IN, NEW DUPLEX, 4.5 bedrooms, 2.5 baths, prime view, long term. Tel. 03-635-8943. [794909]

BUSINESS OFFERS General

OFFERS
DIRECT FROM FACTORY: Conversion machinery for toilet paper, napkins, tissue and other products. Tel. 03-923-6888. [796373]

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FOR RENT, FULLY equipped art gallery or other use, 31 King George St., \$1900. Tel. 02-566-8028 (NIS). [025768]

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PALMISTRY, INDIVIDUAL READINGS and consultations. Andree, Tel. 02-624-7259.

HEALTH
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RISHON, AU-PAIR NEEDED for 8 months twice, live-in, references + experience. Tel. 03-940-2233. [796389]

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SITUATIONS VACANT Jerusalem

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RAFFLES HAIRDRESSING REQUIRE part-time, English/Hebrew speaking receptionist. Tel. 02-823-5937. [8]

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High-Tech company seeks TECHNICAL LAYOUT ARTIST for technical documentation Requirements: • English, mother-tongue level • Knowledge of Word and Corel Draw essential Please fax C.V. to Fiona: 02-653-5369

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SITUATIONS VACANT Tel Aviv

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HOUSEHOLD HELP
HOUSEKEEPER REQUIRED, LIVE-IN, cooking, references. Tel. 03-641-4306, 050-237-227. [796393]

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MEN/WOMEN, LIVE-IN/LIVE-OUT, part-time/full-time. Tel. 03-512-4059, 03-290-280. [795195]

LESSONS
LANGUAGE CENTER: HEBREW, Russian, Arabic... psychometric university preparations. English teachers needed. Tel. 03-962-7210. [88]

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GENERAL ASSISTANCE

EMERGENCY PHARMACIES

Friday, December 25

Jerusalem: Amnon, 9 Leif Yaffe, 679-1901; Balam, Salah, 627-2315; Shufat, Shufat Road, 581-0108; Dar Adawa, Harod's Gate, 628-2058.

Tel Aviv: Shimon Hamelech, 78 Shimon Hamelech, 524-5461; Alva, 165 Ditzengoff, 522-4717.

Ramatana-Kfar Sava: Hadarim, Yosef, Kfar Sava, 785-2520.

Netanya: Hanesel, 36 Weizmann, 882-3538.

Haifa: Super Pharm, Hama'im Tower, 2 Khoury, 051-582021; New Pharm, 40 Hanita, 052-331013; Hanesel, 33 Hanesel, 333-3312.

Kiryat area: Nevah Haim, 77 Mohe Sharet, Kiryat Haim, 872-8002.

Herzliya-New Pharm, Beit Merkazim, 6 Masik (on Sderot Hagolim), Herzliya Pituah, 954-9903, Open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Upper Nazareth: New Pharm, Lev Ha'ir Mail, 657-0488, Open 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Saturday, December 26

Jerusalem: (day) Jaffa Gate, 628-3898; (evening) Pharm-X, Center 1, 537-7667; (day and evening) Balam, Salah, 627-2315; Shufat, Shufat Road, 581-0108; Dar Adawa, Harod's Gate, 628-2058.

Tel Aviv: Bloch, 32 Bloch, 522-6425; Brit, 28 King George, 528-3731.

Ramatana-Kfar Sava: (day) Shoel, 78 Aluva, Ramana, 748-1088; (evening) Hyper Pharm, Hatzomet mail, Kfar Sava, 743-0682.

Netanya: Hasharon mail, Herzl, 861-7766.

Haifa: Super Pharm (Lev Hama'im), 53 Hahitadot, 051-582021; New Pharm, 40 Hanita, 052-331013; Haneikim, 851-3005.

Kiryat area: Super Pharm, Hadyon, 44 Hapaleh, Kiryat Beik, 877-9320.

Herzliya: New Pharm, Beit Merkazim, 6 Masik (on Sderot Hagolim), Herzliya Pituah, 954-9903, Open 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Upper Nazareth: New Pharm, Lev Ha'ir Mail, 657-0488, Open 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.

DUTY HOSPITALS

Friday, December 25

Jerusalem: Shaar Zedek (Internal); Hadassah Ein Karem (surgery, orthopedics, obstetrics, ophthalmology, ENT); Bikur Holim (pediatrics).

Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv Medical Center Dana Pediatric Hospital (pediatrics); Tel Aviv Medical Center (Internal, surgery).

Netanya: Laniado.

Saturday, December 26

Jerusalem: Hadassah Ein Karem (Internal, surgery, orthopedics, ophthalmology, ENT); Bikur Holim (obstetrics); Shaar Zedek (pediatrics).

Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv Medical Center Dana Pediatric Hospital (pediatrics); Tel Aviv Medical Center (Internal, surgery).

Netanya: Laniado.

POLICE 100

FIRE 102

In emergencies dial 102. Otherwise, dial number of your local station as given in the front of the phone directory.

FIRST AID 101

Magen David Adom

In emergencies dial 101 in most parts of the country. In addition:

Andor 0511333 Kfar Sava 0902222

Ashdod 0511332 Nahariya 0812333

Beer Sheva 0274767 Netanya 0904444

Beit Shimon 0523133 P. Tiba 0511111

Dan Region 0593333 Rehovot 0451333

Elar 0338444 Rishon 0452333

Haifa 0512233 Sderot 0623333

Jerusalem 0523133 Tel Aviv 0480111

Karmel 0588444 Tiberias 0794444

* Mobile Intensive Care Unit (MICU) service in the area, around the clock.

Help line for English-speakers -

Confidential hot-line counseling and referrals for all ages, all problems. MILER Center for Crisis Counseling. (02) 654-1111, 1-800-654-1111.

Medical help for tourists (in English) 177-022-9110.

The National Poison Control Center at Rambam Hospital, phone 04-852-9205 for emergency calls 24 hours a day, for information in case of poisoning.

Erin - Emotional First Aid - 1201, also Jerusalem 02-561-0303 (Arabic: 563-0301); Tel Aviv 03-546-1111 (child/young 546-0739); Rishon LeZion 03-956-6961/2; Haifa 04-867-2222 (Arabic: 867-2225); Beer Sheva 07-849-4333; Netanya 09-862-5110; Karmel 04-988-8778 (Arabic: 868-3444); Kfar Sava 09-787-4555; Hadera 04-634-5789; Nazareth (Arabic: 06-645-4222).

Rape Crisis Center (24 hours), Tel Aviv 523-4819, 544-9191 (men), Jerusalem 625-5558, Haifa 833-0333, Eilat 833-1977.

Crisis Center for Religious Women 02-655-7445, 24-hour service, confidentiality guaranteed.

Emergency line for women in distress Sunday-Thursday 24 hrs a day, Friday 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. 09-950-5720.

Wizo hotlines for battered women 02-651-4111, 03-548-1133, 07-637-6310, 08-855-0506.

Kupat Holim Information Center 177-022-1906, Sunday-Thursday, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Friday 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Hadassah/Jerusalem Municipal Health Center for Adolescents, 6 Chilo St., Kiryat Hayovel, Jlm. Advice by phone 02-643-3882.

Hadassah Medical Organization - Israel Cancer Association telephone support service 02-624-7676.

Flight arrivals - for information in English 03-972-3344.

RELIGIOUS SERVICES

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RELIGIOUS SERVICES

TORA PORTION: Vaygash

JER-CHRISTIAN

REDEEMER CHURCH - Lutheran, Maristan Rd. Old City, Jerusalem. Sunday services: English 9:00 a.m., German 10:30 a.m. Tel. 6276111, 6291049.

JERUSALEM BAPTIST CHURCH - The Baptist House Center, 44 Narkis St., Sun. 10:45 a.m., 5:30 p.m. Tel. 02-6255942.

RELIGIOUS SERVICES

KING OF KINGS Assembly, Sun. services 8 p.m., YMCA Auditorium, 26 King David St. For information call 02-551-0017.

PENTECOSTAL WORSHIP SERVICES

St. Zion Fellowship, Fri., Sat., Sun., 10:30 a.m., 7:30 p.m. Tel. 02-552-8964.

JERUSALEM

HEBREW UNION COLLEGE, 13 King David St. Shabbat morning service, 9:30 a.m.

RELIGIOUS SERVICES

MORESHET YISRAEL - Conservative 4 Agron. Dr. Avraham Feder, Rabbi. Mincha 4:25 p.m., Shacharit 6:30 a.m., Mincha 3:40 p.m., Daily Minyan 7:00 a.m.

TEL AVIV-CHRISTIAN

Immanuel Church, 15 Beer Holman, Tel. 03-6820664. Services: Saturday 11 a.m., Sunday at 10 a.m. [79644]

WHERE TO GO

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WHERE TO GO

HEBREW UNIVERSITY. Tours of the Mount Scopus campus in English, daily Sun-Thur. 11 a.m. from Britman Reception Centre, Sherman Administration Bldg. Buses 44, 9, 23, 26, 28. For info, call 928219.

WHERE TO GO

HAIFA

WHAT'S ON IN HAIFA, dial 04-8574253.

WHERE TO GO

JERUSALEM

CONDUCTED TOURS
Tourists and Visitors. Come and see the General Israel Orphan Home for Girls, Jerusalem. Its period activities and impressively modern buildings. Free Guided tours weekdays, 9-12 Bus no. 14, 24, Kiryat Moshe. 6523291.

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ART GUIDE

HAIFA

THE REUBEN AND EDITH HECHT MUSEUM. (Haifa University). Permanent exhibition: The People of Israel in Eretz Yisrael - Phenomenons on the Northern Coast of Israel in the Biblical Period - Illness and Healing in Ancient Times - Impressionism and the Jewish School of Paris. Open Sun., Mon., Wed., Thur. 10-4, Tue. 10-7, Fri. 10-1. Sat. 10-12 ADMISSION FREE.

ART GUIDE

JERUSALEM

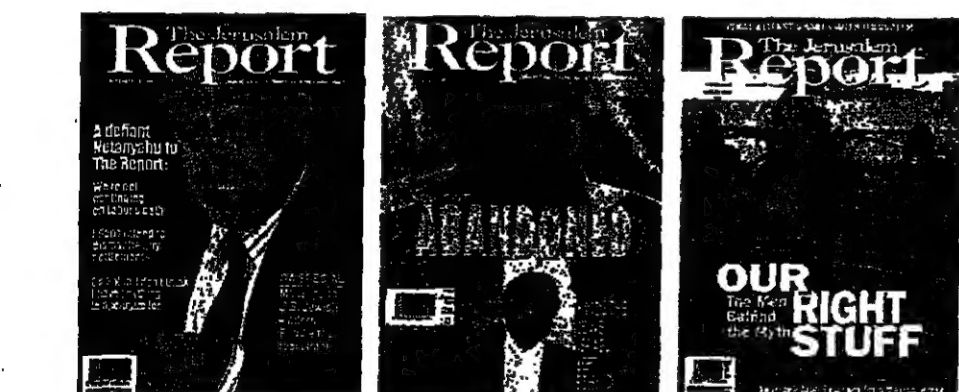
Museums
OLD YISHUV COURT MUSEUM. Life in the Jewish community in the Old City. 165-189 Registry - World War II. 6 Or Hachaim, Jewish Quarter, Old City. Sun-Thur. 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

ART GUIDE

TEL AVIV

TEL AVIV MUSEUM OF ART. Ninety Years of Israel Art - selection from the Joseph Hackney-Israel Phoenix Collection. Hedva Ser - tapestries produced in the Aubusson workshops. Plastic Times - Plastic + Design. Josef Jerrold, paintings, Isaac Isakov. Chronicle of Life. From the Cabinet of Curiosities to Virtual Reality. The Museum - Past, Present and Future. "A Point of View" - children's exhibition. Collections. HELENA RUBINSTEIN PAVILION FOR CONTEMPORARY ART. Hours: 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Tue.-Thu., 10 a.m.-10 p.m. Fri., 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Sat., 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Meyerhoff Art Education Center. Tel. 6919155-8.

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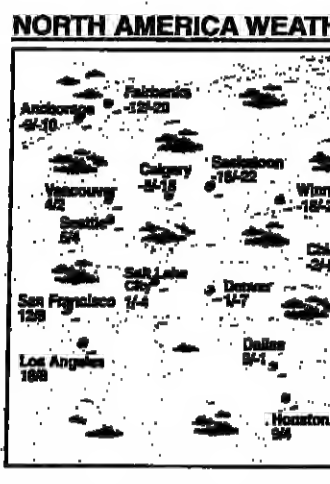
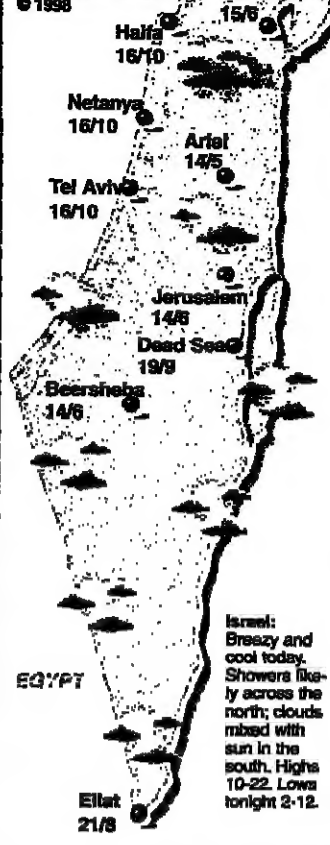
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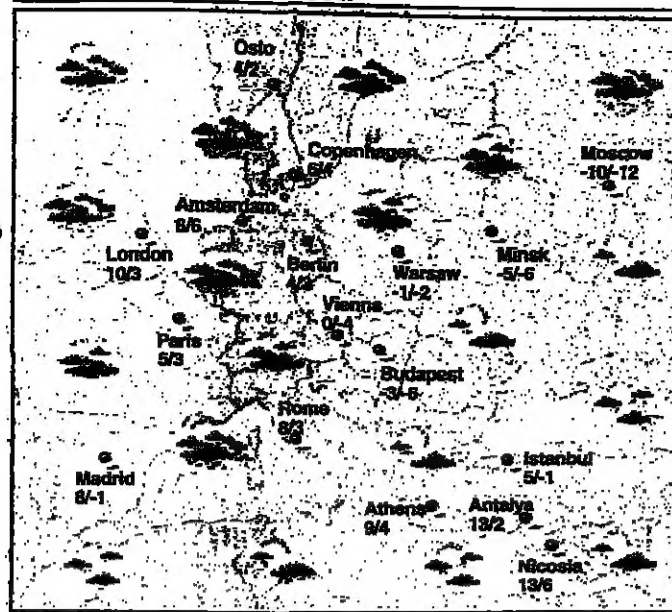
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EUROPE WEATHER TODAY



Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's high and tonight's low.

ISRAEL CITIES		Saturday		Sunday		Monday	
City	High/Low	High/Low	High/Low	High/Low	High/Low	High/Low	High/Low
Tel Aviv	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5
Jerusalem	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5
Haifa	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5
Beersheva	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5
Dead Sea	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5
Jericho	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5
Hebron	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5
Nablus	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5
Tulkarm	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5
Ramallah	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5
Bethlehem	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5
Jerusalem	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5
Hebron	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5
Nablus	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5
Tulkarm	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5
Ramallah	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5
Bethlehem	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5

INTERNATIONAL CITIES		Saturday		Sunday		Monday	
City	High/Low	High/Low	High/Low	High/Low	High/Low	High/Low	High/Low
London	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5
Paris	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5
Berlin	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5
Moscow	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5
Amsterdam	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5
Brussels	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5
Madrid	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5
Rome	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5
Stockholm	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5
Oslo	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5
Helsinki	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5
Tokyo	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5
Sydney	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5
Melbourne	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5
Auckland	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5
Wellington	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5
Dunedin	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5
Christchurch	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5
Invercargill	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5	14/5

Different groups, same goals

FUNDS

Helping those who are less fortunate crosses all boundaries - national, religious and age groups. This week we want to thank two very different groups that go out of their way, through our funds, to support those less able to support themselves.

Firstly, let me thank the American International School of Kfar Shmaryahu for putting on their traditional Hanukkah/Christmas show and to thank all the pupils and parents who donated holiday gifts to our Toy Fund.

We will make sure that the wonderful presents they gave us will go to kids in need. I also want to thank Richard Shavel-Tzion and the Ramatayim Men's Choir, soloist Colin Schachar and accompanist Raymond Goldstein, and the Ankor Youth Choir directed by Smadar Kolbin for a beautiful Hanukkah evening at the Israel Museum which contributed a substantial gift to our work. Thank you one and all.

Please rush your checks to: The Jerusalem Post Funds, P.O.B. 81, 91000 Jerusalem. We (Ille Feldman and Judy Aminoff) can be reached by telephone at (02) 537-6528 if you wish to make a VISA credit card donation or if you have any queries.

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NIS 315 Anon, Jem.
NIS 200 Ben Chaim. Mrs. Nina Bellows. Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Alek.
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NIS 125 in loving memory of our dear ones' yearzits - Bob and Lorraine Hoffman.
NIS 125 Mr. and Mrs. M. Heymann.
NIS 120 Dr. Kurt Bricker. Mr. and Mrs. Sam Fisher.
NIS 100 in loving memory of my parents Bessie and Jack Zeff - Ethel Schain. Dr. Zvi Rigbi. M. P. R. In memory of all my loved ones - Rose Shaw. Mrs. Rose Kretzmer. Mrs. Matilde Gordon.
NIS 75 in loving memory of our dear parents Kathie and Bruno Silberstein - Ina Heineberg. S.A. Peter Silberstein. M. A. Tel, Allen Silberstein Henderson, Nevada. Harris Miller & Co.
NIS 60 Mr. and Mrs. Sternberg.
NIS 54 Ellenbogen. In memory of Wanda and Ernst Kohn - Laurence Levy. Dr. and Mrs. Harvey Cohen.
NIS 50 in honor of our dear parents' and grandparents' golden wedding Irene and Julius Simpson - Michelle, Stephen, Rachel and Danny Simpson. In memory of my beloved husband - Ilsa Sender. Mr. and Mrs. Norman Sacks. Mr. and Mrs. D. Burgin. Abram.



American International School elementary principal Elaine Levy (second from left) donates the first of many holiday gifts for the Toy Fund to the 'Jerusalem Post's Malcolm Gafson (right), as the school's musical director Frannie Goldstein and P.E. instructor Graham Gadd, wearing a Santa Claus outfit, look on.

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English soccer fan seeks legal recourse against lazy players

WEST BROMWICH (AP) — An English soccer fan has attempted to set a precedent which might help the coaches who tear their hair out when players fail to perform up to expectations.

West Bromwich Albion fan Bill Archer became so frustrated with his team's lackluster performances that he reported the players to officers of the Trading Standards Authority.

Archer complained to Trading Standards on the grounds that he wasn't getting his money's worth at the games — Albion's loss to lowly rated Tranmere in a division one match on the weekend was the final straw.

The leadup to the festive season hasn't brought too much good cheer for England's batch of professional soccer players this week.

Rock legend Sir Elton John, chairman of division one team Watford, started the backlash when he made national headlines Wednesday by describing premier league players as lazy and overpaid.

Then Archer demanded some legal recourse against the players who weren't producing the goods on the field.

"They're playing for £5,000, £10,000 even £20,000 per week — surely they should perform on a Saturday. That's all the fans want," Archer told Sky News yesterday.

(The solution) is simple. If (players) don't perform, they don't get paid." West Brom are currently middle of the standings in division one and although manager Dave Smith agrees the team "can improve 100 percent", there are plenty of other teams doing worse.

A little bit of good news for out-of-form players is that the Trading Standards authority decided Archer had no case.

Buying a ticket enables fans to watch a game, whether or not its worth watching is not the issue, was the regulatory body's official line.



Praguan Carlos Gamarra holds aloft the Brazilian soccer championship trophy as he celebrates with fellow Corinthians Amaral (left) and Gilmar (2nd left).

Edilson strikes as Corinthians win Brazilian soccer title

RIO DE JANEIRO (Reuters) — Corinthians won the Brazilian championship on Wednesday, beating Cruzeiro 2-0 in the third and final leg of the final to claim the title for the second time in their history.

Former international Edilson scored the crucial goal in the 65th minute of Brazil's soccer showpiece, played on a midweek afternoon apparently to accommodate a children's Christmas television special.

Marcelinho Carioca, back in the team after a tiff with coach Vanderley Luxemburgo last month, scored the second in the 83rd minute. Both goals were set up by halftime substitute Dinei.

It was Luxemburgo's last game in charge as he is leaving to take sole charge of the Brazil national team. Luxemburgo, who is serving a 60-day touchline ban watched from the stands. He has taken on both roles since August.

Corinthians, who first won the title in 1990 and were nearly relegated last year, needed only a draw at home in Sao Paulo after the first two matches had ended in 2-2 and 1-1 draws.

Under the intriguing and unique Brazilian championship rules, the three-leg knockout ties are decided on points, goal aggregate if points are level and finally first stage record, in which Corinthians had the advantage.

Cruzeiro, who have twice been South American champions but never won the Brazilian title, paid the price for the over-cautious tactics of coach Levir Culpi who began with a defensive formation.

Veteran striker Muller and 19-year-old Fabio Junior never got the service they needed to overcome a Corinthians defense superbly organized by Paraguay World Cup defender Carlos Gamarra.

Despite pre-match bickering over the referee,

which had seen both clubs pressuring backstage to have the official of their choice nominated, it was a good-natured contest with only three bookings.

The first half saw only one decent chance at each end before Corinthians took control after the break.

Dinei set up the first goal by threading the ball through to Edilson who rounded goalkeeper Dida to score his 16th goal of the competition.

Seven minutes from the end Dinei created the second with a run to the byline and cross which Marcelinho Carioca headed home for his 19th goal of the competition to finish as second top scorer behind Viola of Santos.

The game was originally scheduled for the evening, but was brought forward to four o'clock local time. Officials from both clubs blamed a Christmas special featuring children's television personality Xuxa for the alteration.

Springboks dominated '98 on eve of World Cup

LONDON (Reuters) — On a cold December day the thousands of fans walking from the station to Twickenham for the South Africa Test match with South Africa at Twickenham had an extra spring in their step.

"This is really the big one," one said before he took another drink from a hip flask.

The words summed up the significance of the game in world rugby less than a year before the World Cup.

After the most impressive set of performances for nearly 30 years during which they had beaten rugby's elite, the Springboks were poised for an 18th consecutive Test victory which would break a world record set by New Zealand in 1969.

But rugby desperately needed a European victory to stop the 1999 World Cup being regarded as a glorified southern hemisphere Tri-Nations competition with South Africa, New Zealand and Australia

ready to dominate again. England delivered a 13-7 victory over the world champions which gave the northern hemisphere nations hope that they could win the competition for the first time next year.

The year will be remembered for Nick Mallett's awesome Springbok team who won the Tri-Nations competition, beating Australia and the All Blacks twice each and equalling the consecutive Test run of 17 wins set by the New Zealanders between 1965 and 1969.

After the low of their home series defeat by the British Lions in 1997, Mallett had transformed the team into a formidable outfit. They proved to be rugby's equivalent of Germany in soccer, never beaten until the final whistle.

The Twickenham defeat may have changed the world order. "With one win, England have proved that the World Cup will be

more than just a glorified Tri-Nations series," said former Australian international Michael Lynagh.

"The top five positions are probably unchanged — South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, England and France — but it does mean that, on any given day, any one of these teams can beat the others."

South Africa's greatest strength is their well-organized defense. But they also have superior fitness which allows them to keep pounding defenses with multi-phases of play right up until the dying seconds.

The most striking example of their stamina came in Durban in the middle of August when they were trailing the All Blacks 23-5 going into the final quarter of a Tri-Nations clash before staging a remarkable comeback to win 24-23.

A typical dark break and score by scrumhalf Joost van der Westhuizen followed by another from replacement flanker Bobby Skinstad four minutes later closed the gap to four points on an otherwise ruthless All Black defense went to sleep.

With time running out, the Springboks opted to kick a penalty to the corner and from the resulting lineout hooker James Dalton was carried over by his pack for the winning try in injury time.

It was the All Blacks' fourth defeat in a row, their worst run since they lost six successive Tests in 1949.

The victory spoke volumes for the Springboks' determination. When Mallett brought his team to Britain and Ireland in the European winter for what was billed as a record-breaking grand slam tour, the northern hemisphere nations were given little chance of stopping them.

Yet in the first Test Wales made the Springboks work desperately hard for a 28-20 victory. There were signs in their victories over Scotland and Ireland that the northern hemisphere nations were matching the South Africans in defensive terms.

England's victory was a triumph for coach Clive Woodward who had been trying to get his team to play expansive rugby for a year but had yet to beat any of the southern hemisphere nations.

But it was interesting that Mallett was soon talking about the team he regards as the main danger at the World Cup — the New Zealand All Blacks.

The All Blacks had a calamitous year by their standards, clocking up five test defeats in a row, losing the Bledisloe Cup to Australia and coming in a distant third in the Tri-Nations series.

But Mallett, like the rest of the rugby world, fears they will be back to their best in 1999 after a summer's break.

Ba move to Newcastle scuppered after medical

NEWCASTLE (AP) — Newcastle withdrew a £2.5 million bid to hire AC Milan winger Ibrahim Ba on yesterday after the Frenchman failed a medical at St. James' Park.

Magpies manager Ruud Gullit said Newcastle and AC Milan had agreed terms for the 25-year-old international but the deal was scuppered when medical tests on Wednesday detected Ba had a long-standing knee injury.

Gullit, under fire this week when a club executive questioned his commitment to Newcastle and said he spent as much time in the Netherlands as he did on the Tyneside, revealed his latest trip abroad was a smokescreen as he attempted to sign Ba.

"We had a player we had worked very hard to get as quickly as possible but then he failed his medical," Gullit said.

"It's a very big disappointment. We worked very hard to get him here for his medical in secret."

"In the past we had a lot of stories in the newspapers but we saw already with Duncan Ferguson that it was kept a secret and we got him. "Now again with Ba, it was kept a secret. Nobody knew what was going on and unfortunately I was the target for that."

"But if you can get a player in and be the target, then so be it." Gullit, a former Dutch international and Chelsea manager, replaced Kenny Dalglish as manager at Newcastle in August.

Predators deal Red Wings fourth straight loss

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (Reuters) — The Detroit Red Wings' tailspin deepened on Wednesday as they lost their fourth straight, falling 5-3 to the expansion Nashville Predators.

Tomas Vokoun made a career-high 30 saves and Cliff Roming and Scott Walker each scored twice to lead the Predators.

It is the second four-game losing streak of the season for the two-time defending Stanley Cup champions, who had gone five years without losing four in a row.

Vokoun was making his sixth start in seven games in place of the injured Mike Dunham. He made 18 saves in the first period and 16 in each of the last two to come within two of Dunham's franchise record.

Steve Yzerman scored twice for Detroit, which still leads St. Louis in the Central Division by five points. Devils 4, Blues 2

In East Rutherford, red-hot Bobby Holik recorded his first hat trick in

nearly six years, leading the New Jersey Devils to a 4-2 victory over the St. Louis Blues, whose road winless streak reached nine games.

Holik scored in each period for his third career hat trick and first since January 1993. He has 10 goals and three assists in his last eight contests.

Sabres 2, Lightning 0 In Buffalo, Dominik Hasek made 38 saves for his league-leading sixth shutout, lifting the surging Sabres to a 2-0 victory over the woeful Tampa Bay Lightning, winless in their last five games (0-4-1).

Brian Holzinger and Miroslav Satan scored for Buffalo. Blackhawks 4, Coyotes 3

In Chicago, Doug Gilmour scored twice and Tony Amonte's league-leading 23rd goal snapped a second-period tie as the Blackhawks halted a five-game winless streak with a 4-3 triumph over the Phoenix Coyotes.

Jocelyn Thibault made 32 saves for Chicago, which had lost its last three games and was 0-4-1 in its last five.

Capitals 4, Panthers 0 In Sunrise, Olaf Kolzig, supported by a week's worth of goals, recorded his third shutout of the season as the Washington Capitals blanked the Florida Panthers 4-0 for just their third win in 11 games.

Calle Johansson and Brian Bellows scored on the power play and Andrei Nikolishin added a shorthanded tally for the Capitals, who combined for four goals in their previous four games.

Sharks 5, Oilers 3 In Edmonton, Marco Sturm had a career night with his first hat trick and an assist, leading the San Jose Sharks to their season-high third straight victory, 5-3 over the sputtering Oilers.

Dean McAmmond scored a goal and set up another for the Oilers, who have just one win in their last 10 games (1-7-2).

Stars 5, Maple Leafs 1 In Toronto, Mike Modano recorded his fifth career hat trick and Ed Belfour made 21 saves as the Dallas Stars frustrated goaltender Curtis Joseph and the Maple Leafs with a 5-1 victory that extended their unbeaten streak to 10 games.

Senators 3, Canadiens 1 At Ottawa, the Montreal Canadiens' winless streak reached 11 games (0-6-5), one short of the franchise record, as Magnus Arvedson scored the go-ahead goal with 3:05 left in the third period to lift the Ottawa Senators to a 3-1 victory.

Hurricanes 1, NY Rangers 0 In New York, Arums Irbere recorded his fifth shutout of the season and Ray Sheppard victimized his former team with the game's lone goal as the Carolina Hurricanes blanked the Rangers 1-0.

Flyers 2, Bruins 1 In Boston, John LeClair scored his 22nd goal and assisted on Eric Desjardins' third-period tally that lifted the Philadelphia Flyers to a 2-1 victory over the Bruins.

Canucks 5, Flames 2 In Vancouver, Markus Naslund

scored twice, including the game-winner in the second period, as the Canucks completed a sweep of their home-and-home series with a 5-2 triumph over the Calgary Flames.

EASTERN CONFERENCE
Atlantic Division

New Jersey 19 8 4 42 94 78
Philadelphia 15 9 8 38 88 71
Pittsburgh 13 10 7 33 83 83
NY Rangers 11 14 7 29 84 87
NY Islanders 12 9 2 24 82 96

Northwest Division
Buffalo 18 6 5 41 85 81
Toronto 19 12 2 40 104 95
Boston 15 10 6 34 83 83
Ottawa 15 12 3 33 89 74
Montreal 8 18 7 23 71 95

Southeast Division
Carolina 16 13 5 37 86 78
Florida 11 12 6 28 73 80
Washington 18 17 3 23 84 78
Tampa Bay 8 22 3 19 68 116

WESTERN CONFERENCE
Central Division

Detroit 17 14 1 35 99 87
St. Louis 11 11 8 30 79 76
Nashville 12 16 3 27 75 96
Chicago 10 19 4 24 75 110

Northwest Division
Colorado 14 15 3 31 75 79
Edmonton 14 16 3 31 76 73
Vancouver 13 15 4 30 94 95
Calgary 12 18 3 27 92 100

Pacific Division
Dallas 20 5 6 46 94 63
Phoenix 19 6 4 42 87 55
Anaheim 13 12 7 31 76 73
San Jose 9 15 7 25 67 74
Los Angeles 10 20 3 23 75 91

Wednesday's Games: Buffalo 2, Tampa Bay 0; Philadelphia 2, Boston 1; Dallas 5, Toronto 1; Ottawa 3, Montreal 1; New Jersey 4, St. Louis 2; Carolina 1, NY Rangers 0; Washington 4, Florida 0; Nashville 5, Detroit 3; Chicago 4, Phoenix 2; San Jose 5, Edmonton 3; Vancouver 5, Calgary 2.

Olympic question: When is a gift a bribe?

NEW YORK (AP) — Among Olympic perks, there are gifts, favors and possibly bribes. And then, there are bulldozers.

As the International Olympic Committee wrestles with its greatest ethics scandal and three panels investigate alleged bribery in Salt Lake City's bid for the Winter Games, IOC members and potential host cities face the issue of where friendliness ends and corruption begins.

Atlanta, like most bid cities, handed out gifts to visiting IOC members, and at least one had four legs and a wet nose — a bulldog for a Cuban delegate.

"You get caught up in the entertainment mode and you may do things that stretch the rules," said Charlie Battle, who was in charge of international relations in Atlanta's winning bid for the 1996 Olympics. "You go over the top." In what may have been one of the most creative acts of gift-giving, Atlanta boss Billy Payne gave a bulldog to IOC member Manuel Gonzalez Guerra after he admired Uga, the mascot of Payne's alma mater, the University of Georgia.

"The biggest problem we had was getting Customs to let him take the dog back," Battle said. "They don't like people taking things to Havana from the United States. Maybe they were afraid we were hiding spy gear in his collar." There's no way of knowing if Guerra voted for Atlanta in the secret balloting in Tokyo in 1990, and IOC rules now limit gifts to a total of \$150 a member — meaning any current canine giveaways would probably involve

a mutt. In the two weeks since the Salt Lake Organizing Committee said families of six IOC members received \$400,000 in college scholarships during its successful bid for the 2002 Winter Games, Olympic organizers past, present and future have defended their work amid allegations that the scandal extends far beyond Utah.

Marc Hodler, the IOC's senior member and one of its most respected, said 5 to 7 percent of the committee's 115 members were open to bribes and that vote buying occurred in the campaigns for the 1996, 1998 and 2000 Olympics.

Olympic organizers and IOC members say they have done nothing wrong and played by the rules, but they also acknowledged that those rules are now being drastically tightened by the Salt Lake case.

"The USOC has made it clear to us what we can and cannot do," said Nick Vehr, the head of Cincinnati's bid. "We have their entire undertaking on limits of gifts and such."

The USOC had no rules on bidding when Salt Lake City finally won the Olympics on its fifth try in 1995, according to committee president Bill Hybl.

The IOC imposed its first limits in 1986, after the volume of gifts and favors in the campaigns for the 1992 Games became embarrassing. Those "tokens" included fur coats, diamond jewelry and unlimited first-class travel for members who wanted one more peek at cities like Paris, Barcelona and Brisbane.

SPORTS

in brief

Brazil end year top of FIFA rankings

ZURICH (Reuters) — World Cup runners-up Brazil ended the year top of FIFA's world rankings with their conquerors France in second place.

Croatia, third place finishers at France 98, won 'Best Mover of the Year' for the second time since 1994, jumping up 15 places from their year end ranking in 1997 to fourth, behind Germany, the team they beat in the quarter-finals.

Two Asian teams made late charges to earn places in the top 30, Japan jumping 10 places to 30 while Iran, recent winners of the Asian Games title, soared 17 places to 27.

Israel ended the year in 43rd position.

Korda will defend Australian Open title

MELBOURNE (Reuters) — Petr Korda will defend his title at next month's Australian Open despite testing positive for steroids during this year's Wimbledon tennis championships.

A spokeswoman for the Australian Open said the Czech star had entered the first Grand Slam of the season and was intending to play. "As far as we're concerned everything's fine. Petr is booked to play in the Colonial Classic the week before the Open and will defend his title after that," the spokeswoman said.

The 1999 Australian Open will be held at Melbourne Park from January 18-31. The Colonial Classic will be held at Kooyong from January 13-16.

Korda, 30, won his first ever Grand Slam title when he beat Chile's Marcelo Rios in the final of this year's Australian Open.

But Korda was embroiled in a doping scandal when the International Tennis Federation (ITF) announced on Tuesday that he had tested positive for the banned steroid nandrolone at this year's Wimbledon championships.

The statement said Korda had been stripped of his ranking points and the US\$94,529 he had earned in prize money during the tournament.

Caesarea golf

Leslie ben Amir captured the A division of the individual stableford competition at the Caesarea Golf Club with 42 stableford points. Clive Jossel managed 35 for second place and Mike Bannister was third with 28.

Mati Gert was the leader in the B division with 40 points, followed by Norma Kaufman, also on 40, but with an inferior back nine. Third place went to Eli Segev with his 36.

Jules Cubumek won the C division with 33, followed by Yaakov Deutch on 32 and Leany Landau on 30.

The Hanukkah family day better-ball stableford tournament was won by the father-and-son team of Effie and Laurie Ben with a 12 better than par 48 stableford points. Spouses Abe and Shelley Tiber were second with 45 points.

The two best ball stableford K-C competition on Saturday was won by Cubumek, Shai Cohen, Jeff Strubel and Shlomo Fernin with an 18 better than par 90 points. Harold Stutzen, Dennis Goldstein, Mike Mannor and Gabriel Fish were second with 89.

Heather Chait

Klos joins Rangers at last

GLASGOW (Reuters) — Rangers finally ended their long pursuit of Stefan Klos yesterday when they signed the Borussia Dortmund goalkeeper in a £700,000 deal to a 4-1/2 years contract.

Rangers chairman David Murray said that Klos had been so anxious to join the Scottish club — which he was prevented from doing by a German court six months ago — that he paid some of the transfer fee himself.

Klos had agreed to go to Rangers at the end of last season when his contract expired, but was forced to remain with Dortmund after the Bundesliga club took him to court to enforce a year's option that they held on the player.

WINNING CARDS

in yesterday's Mifal Hapayis daily chance drawing

7 K K K K

10 J A K

10 K 10 J

Inside

Soccer fan wants to sue lazy players

Page 23

Sports Editors

Joe Hoffman & Ori Lewis

Hap. Haifa appear unstoppable

By ORI LEWIS

Just a couple of rounds ago, with so much of the soccer season remaining, Hapoel Haifa had already been crowned by the pundits as new National League champions.

With just over half the season left, Haifa lead the league by six points from cross-city rivals Maccabi, and are 10 ahead of Beitar Jerusalem and fading Hapoel Petah Tikva.

The gap at the top has closed slightly – it was as much as eight points at one stage – as the cream rises to the top and the better clubs mount their challenge.

As things stand, Hapoel Haifa look a very solid outfit, having conceded only three goals in their 13 league outings so far. It is hard to see how they can falter when their defense is so airtight.

Tomorrow's trip to Ironi Ashdod will not be easy, the hosts have a habit of causing upsets, and in Amir Turjeman they have one of the most potent strikers in the league.

But Haifa still have their ace, Giovanni Rosso, who appears unable to do any wrong at the moment.

And with the morale boost gained by midfielder Oren Zeituni, who was outstanding as a substitute in his international debut against Yugoslavia on Wednesday, it appears that there are no flaws in the Haifa lineup. All the way through from goalkeeper Dudu Awat, to Ran Ben-Shimon, Ofer Talkar and Najwan Graybe, who earned a rare shower of superlatives from national coach Shlomo Scharf for his excellent display against Yugoslavia, and forwards Goran Milenko and Alexander Jovic.

Among the chasing pack, Beitar Jerusalem travel to Hapoel Kfar Sava today and Maccabi Haifa host Maccabi Jaffa tomorrow afternoon, both big clubs should win.

This weekend's National League fixtures (all matches tomorrow at 14:30 unless stated): Beitar Jerusalem v. Maccabi Tel Aviv, Hapoel Haifa v. Hapoel Kfar Sava, Hapoel Ashdod v. Hapoel Haifa, Ashdod 17:00, Ironi Rishon v. Hapoel Petah Tikva, Rishon 18:00, Hapoel Tel Aviv v. Zefran Holon, Bnei Yehuda 18:00, Hapoel Jerusalem v. Maccabi Herzliya, Teddy Stadium, Maccabi Haifa v. Maccabi Jaffa, Kiryat Elimezer 18:30, Maccabi Petah Tikva v. Hapoel Be'er Sheva, Petah Tikva.

NATIONAL LEAGUE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Hapoel Haifa	13	11	2	0	26	3	35
Maccabi Haifa	13	9	2	2	31	10	29
Beitar Jerusalem	13	8	1	4	36	16	25
Hapoel Petah Tikva	13	8	1	4	28	17	25
Maccabi Tel Aviv	13	6	3	4	24	18	21
Hapoel Tel Aviv	13	6	3	4	21	16	21
Hapoel Rishon	13	5	3	5	23	16	20
Zefran Holon	13	5	3	5	19	12	18
Ironi Ashdod	13	4	5	4	20	20	17
Hapoel Jerusalem	13	5	2	6	21	25	17
Hapoel Kfar Sava	13	5	2	6	18	28	17
Ironi Rishon	13	4	4	5	23	29	16
Bnei Yehuda	13	3	3	7	17	26	12
Maccabi Herzliya	13	3	1	9	13	23	10
Hapoel Be'er Sheva	13	1	2	10	7	40	5
Maccabi Jaffa	13	1	1	11	8	36	4

NBA has set 'drop-dead' date – report

From greatness to gridlock

NEW YORK (Reuters) – The NBA has set January 7 as the date it will cancel the season – a first in major US professional sports – if a labor agreement cannot be reached to end the owner-imposed lockout, ESPN has said.

NBA deputy commissioner Russ Granik told the sports cable network on Wednesday that the league would recommend to its Board of Governors that it should vote to cancel the season on January 7.

However, Granik also said he expects to meet again with the Players Association before then, as the two sides try to agree how to split up some \$2 billion in revenues.

Negotiations It is the first so-called "drop-dead" date announced by the league. NBA commissioner David Stern had avoided naming a date, saying it would hamper negotiations. He said that without an agreement, the season would eventually cancel itself.

The report came on the heels of some apparent breaks in the ranks of the players.

At last Saturday's charity game in Atlantic City, New Jersey, Utah Jazz superstar forward Karl Malone said the league's current proposal, sent directly by Stern to all the players, was "fair." The union's negotiating committee, headed by executive director Billy Hunter, decided not to vote on the proposal.

On Monday, Toronto Raptors forward Kevin Willis called for a secret ballot by the players, suggesting more of them would favor the proposal than union officials are allowing.

Stern was vacationing in Colorado, and Hunter was spend-

ing the Christmas weekend at his home in the San Francisco Bay area. Both men have said they could make themselves available at short notice but no new talks were scheduled.

Collective bargaining Owners imposed the lockout and reopened collective bargaining on July 1 after the players' share of revenues greatly exceeded the 52 percent trigger set by the old agreement.

Through Wednesday, 356 scheduled games had been wiped out. Teams would likely need about one month to sign players, make trades and conduct training camps before a season could begin.

Over the weekend, Seattle SuperSonics guard Gary Payton and free agent forward Charles Barkley expressed reservations about playing a season of 50 games or less, arguing that it would not be a legitimate season.

Payton suggested he would rather not play at all than play an abbreviated season, even though that decision would cost him millions.

The NBA had never lost games to a work stoppage until this year, but the possible cancellation of the entire season would be a first for any major US pro sport.

In September 1994, baseball owners voted to cancel the remainder of their season – including the World Series – in the face of a players' strike. But teams had played about 110 games before the strike began August 12.

In 1982, NFL teams lost seven games apiece to a players' strike, but an agreement was reached, a shortened season was completed and an expanded playoff system was installed, preserving the season.



HE MEANS BUSINESS! – NBA Commissioner David Stern is set to cancel the season. (Reuters)

McGrath expected to play in 4th Test

MELBOURNE (Reuters) – Australia's premier pace bowler Glenn McGrath is expected to be fit for the fourth Ashes Test against England starting tomorrow despite suffering from a mystery virus.

McGrath, who has a haul of 16 wickets from the first three Tests, had complained of a virus on the final day of the third Test in Adelaide nine days ago.

Australian captain Mark Taylor said yesterday: "He's had a week off and he's feeling a lot better."

"He's gone to get it checked out...it's more precautionary than anything. He could have bowled today in the nets without too much of a problem."

Australia have already lost one of the pacemen originally named in their squad, injury-hit Jason Gillespie, who has been replaced by promising Western Australia fast bowler Matthew Nicholson.

Taylor said: "I haven't seen a lot of him but I know from what I have heard and what I have seen he's quite sharp and can move the ball away from the right-handers."

"In that regard he's in the Gillespie mould but whether he's going to be as accurate and as consistent as Jason I don't know, but we may find out come Boxing Day."

Nicholson's career was in tatters a year ago when he contracted chronic fatigue syndrome, but the 24-year-old paceman has recovered to emerge as one of the brightest prospects in the country.

He has taken 17 wickets in four Sheffield Shield matches this season, and captured seven England wickets in an innings for Western



TRYING SOMETHING DIFFERENT – England team manager Graham Gooch (left) and Pakistani spin bowler Abdul Kadir look for a new approach for the hapless tourists ahead of the Melbourne Test. Abdul Kadir was called in to try to help England sort out some of their problems on their tour of Australia. (Reuters)

Australia in the drawn tour match last month.

Australia lead the five-Test series 2-0, making certain of retaining the Ashes.

Santa Claus arrived early for England, bringing wives and girlfriends to join the players on their beleaguered tour of Australia yesterday.

Otherwise, England will be sweating through fielding training this morning at the MCG in preparation for the Test.

The Christmas holiday marks another day on the touring calendar for England, although morale has been lifted by the arrival of wives and girlfriends for the festive season.

From England's point of view, today also happens to be the eve of one of cricket's biggest days, the opening of the December 26 Test.

More than 70,000 people are expected to follow tradition and flock to cricket's oldest Test venue regardless of the Ashes already having been decided in Australia's favor.

Warne, Waugh to face inquiry

MELBOURNE (Reuters) – The Pakistani investigation into match-fixing in cricket will sit in Australia next month to take evidence from Shane Warne and Mark Waugh.

The Australian Cricket Board (ACB) announced on Wednesday that the two Australian Test players, as well as former ACB chairman Alan Crompton, would go before the inquiry on January 8.

The two players, who have accused former Pakistan captain Salim Malik of offering them a bribe, were ordered to appear after admitting two weeks ago that they accepted money from an illegal Indian bookmaker for information on pitch and weather conditions during a tour of the sub-continent in 1994.

The Pakistani judge in charge of the investigation agreed to travel to Australia after the two Australians declined to go to Pakistan and attempts to set-up a live video link failed.

The ACB also announced that its own investigation into cricket and betting would begin on January 12 and was expected to last for at least three weeks.

The ACB ordered the inquiry after the admissions of Warne and Waugh and revelations by other players that they had also been approached by bookmakers both on the sub-continent and in Australia.

Treated like rock stars in every city they visited, they sold out every game they played. Scottie Pippen, after starting the season on the injured list, demanded a trade.

Dennis Rodman was disinterested, but still won his seventh straight rebounding title. Jordan showed his usual brilliance, leading the league in scoring for the 10th time and picking up his fifth MVP award.

Chicago won 62 games, got past the Pacers in Game 7 of the Eastern finals and made it to the championship round.

Against the Jazz, Pippen's defense helped the Bulls end the series in Game 2. In Game 3, the Bulls held the Jazz to 34 points – the lowest point total in league history since the advent of the 24-second clock.

Jordan called a news conference at a golf tournament and announced "basketball is dead" for him but said he would put off a final decision on his future until the lockout ends.

Forest and Southampton then meet in a relegation dogfight on Monday.

Arsenal put their title challenge back on course with a 3-1 victory over in-form Leeds on Sunday and will not be too concerned to be trailing Villa by seven points at this stage of the season.

The Gunners, who host West Ham tomorrow and visit Charlton on Monday, trailed Manchester United by 13 points at this stage last season before launching into their astonishing run to the championship.

In fact, not since Blackburn in 1994/95 have the team leading the league at Christmas gone on to win the league.

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Premiership title challengers face bottom three

By MITCH PHILLIPS

LONDON (Reuters) – While most of Europe's soccer players take a Christmas break, their English premier league counterparts are preparing for two games in three days.

The holiday period may not be as hectic as it was, when games on successive days, even occasionally two in a day, was the

norm. But Christmas is still seen as a vital period in the season for both ends of the table.

This year is no exception with three title hopefuls facing three relegation candidates tomorrow and then two from each trio facing off on Monday and Tuesday.

The highlight of the holiday program will be next Tuesday when Chelsea play Manchester United.

Less than two weeks ago they

drew 1-1 at Old Trafford.

Chelsea followed that draw with a 2-0 victory over Tottenham Hotspur, that took them to the top for the first time in nine years.

Uruguayan Gustavo Poyet, who scored the opener against Spurs, said: "We are talking about the championship in the dressing room. Sometimes there is a situation where players know it can be their year and that is the

way we are feeling now."

Chelsea stayed first for only two days – Aston Villa reclaiming the honor with a 1-0 win at Charlton Athletic – but it confirmed that the London club are real title contenders this season.

They have a terrific record against United, even if they have fared better at Old Trafford than at home in recent seasons, and victory on Tuesday would be a confidence-boost of monumental proportions.

Before that Chelsea have to visit Southampton, who hauled themselves off the bottom of the

standings with a 3-1 victory over Wimbledon tomorrow, one of their best performances of the season.

United face a similar challenge at home to Nottingham Forest, newly installed in last place.

Forest also found some form last week but were felled by a last minute equalizer in a 2-2 draw with Blackburn Rovers.

Rovers, third from last, complete tomorrow's bottom v. top threesome when they host leaders Villa.

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